MARTIN BROOK

A Story of Modern
American Life

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MARTIN B.

A Novel

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By

Morgan Bates

New York and London
Harper & Brothers Publishers
1901

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Book I

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MARTIN BROOK

Chapter I

JUDGE NORTHCOTE was in excellent humor. Not that he was effusive—the master of Elmhurst was never effusive in the ordinary display of feeling. It was only by a slight lessening of the lines in his grave, high-bred face, and a certain quality of tone in his never-omitted "Thank you" for service rendered, that he sounded the key-note of the household's daily life; for as the master was, so were those about him. Yet there was nothing of intentional tyranny in his manner; merely a tacit insistence that everything should minister to his comfort. Because, to this self-centred bachelor of forty—this observer of deportment—each phase of physical comfort was a necessity, in the natural ordering of his affairs.

As he passed along the wide hallway, this first glorious day of spring in the year of grace 1821, out onto the broad portico, and paused at the top of the great stone steps leading down to the parklike grounds that surrounded the mansion, his every motion was an affirmation that the name of Northcote was a proud inheritance.

And as he stood fastening the brass hooks that held the two ends of the velvet collar of his long, blue broadcloth cloak about the high-rolled collar of his blue broadcloth coat—he still retained the cloak, because of his admiration of Monroe and all he did—his tall, slender figure bore a striking resemblance to that portrait of a Cavalier which hung on the library wall; but his face was the face of a Puritan. And in this seeming contradiction lay the history of his house: the founders of this estate, here on the banks of the upper Hudson, had brought the atmosphere of Virginia into the outposts of the Adirondacks.

In George Northcote, who combined the graciousness of the South with the austerity of the North, the first Northcote was reproduced, as if in earnest protest against the extinguishment of his race. The high, receding forehead, the protruding brows fringed with heavy eyebrows that almost met above an arched and sensitive nose, the prominent cheek-bones, the strong, clean-shaven jaw, the straight mouth with its full under-lip, the iron-gray hair, brushed back and worn long in the neck, were the signs-manual of the Puritan; while, on the other hand, the ease of carriage, the dignity of manner, and the tone of voice came to him from the maternal line—the Fairfields of Virginia.

Among his nearest associates—associates, be it understood, for George Northcote was a man who had many acquaintances, few friends, and no intimates—he was known for his mannerisms rather than his words. Chief among these was the pursing his lips, and the purring, inarticulate murmur in his throat when he was pleased; the wrinkling of his forehead and the knitting of his brows when things went wrong; the exquisite way of handling his curiously carved shell snuff-box—a gift from the great Monroe; and the dainty but significant use of his large white silk handkerchief in moments of intense feeling. This external signal of his mood was always carried in the skirt pocket of his swallow-tailed coat, and came in play only when a tapping of the snuff-box was inadequate to express his meaning. But this was seldom called into requisition, because in the placid life at Elmhurst any manifestation of emotion short of overwhelming righteous anger was held to be a social misdemeanor, since, with the putting away of the rapier and the silken knee-breeches, under protest, Judge Northcote had likewise laid aside all approval of personal contest. The slight droop in his shoulders showed that his contests nowadays were in the realm of thought, fought out in the solitude of his library. Besides, the somewhat sallow hue of his skin indicated a studious and subjective mind.

Still standing on the portico of Elmhurst, he gazed admiringly towards the south, across his large domain—off through the yet leafless forest trees that filled the grounds; off beyond the huge iron gates in the low stone wall that excluded Elmhurst from the highway; off over the sloping meadows to the river-banks and the distant hills on the farther shore. For this estate was his—Elmhurst the beautiful—rising, on a natural mound, on the north side of the Hudson, just where the mighty elbow of the stream turns its long arm seaward. The main edifice, which faced the south, flanked by capacious wings on the east and west, and spanned by a portico, upborne by massive Corinthian columns, and all the accessories to it, bore the distinguishing stamp of Time—the evidences of the Established.

Established in every sense save that which leads to the perpetuity of the name and the maintenance of the estate; for in the midst of all this wealth and grandeur, there was no mistress of Elmhurst except Margaret Wright, the widowed sister of the man we see—a dependant on one who has never permitted himself to comprehend the full meaning of love.

For the moment, however, this thought did not disturb the judge, as he leisurely descended the steps, slowly drawing on his gloves. His attention was for an instant diverted by a brace of shepherd dogs, which came scampering around the house, tearing up the moist sod in their wild gambols. They saw their master and bounded towards him, but dropped to heel, with eager, sidelong glance, their tails pounding the ground. The judge spoke kindly to them, and they were off again, yelping with joy.

Eph Larrabee, the gardener, who was at work uncovering the rose-bushes by the east wing, called reprovingly to the dogs, but they did not heed him as he came out to the gravel-walk, fur cap in hand, and awaited the approach of the judge.

A tall, gaunt fellow, this Larrabee, in the full strength of young manhood. His corduroy breeches, woollen stockings, heavy shoes, and blue flannel shirt contrasted strongly with the elegance of his employer; but his air of independence and imperturbable good-nature indicated his mental and moral attitude of equality before the law.

"Have the bushes withstoood the winter, Larrabee?" the judge asked, looking about, as if questioning the right of nature to be disrespectful here.

"Yes, sir," Eph Larrabee replied. "Don't know ez I ever see 'em looking finer—not sence I come here ez gardener. 'Specially the one Mis' Wright thinks most on. We've been gettin' it in shape, up on your liberary winder. Mis' Wright's around there now, at the east end, givin' orders. Wonderful how that there 'Little Jimmy' bush does thrive."

The judge resumed his walk, without replying, going around the house to where his sister was at work. There was a slight increase in the line between his eyes: Larrabee's words had evidently awakened a painful memory; but he did not speak again until he reached the spot where Mrs. Wright stood, her back towards him, directing the handling of a hardy climbing rose.

She had not yet observed him; and, as he watched her unaffected interest in the work, he saw that her face, with its traces of some deep sorrow, was lighted by a look of tenderness that came from her dark eyes. Her gray hair, puffed out over her ears and caught in a simple knot behind, was covered with a wide-brimmed gardening hat, and her small hands looked grotesque in a pair of thick gloves. The slightness of her figure was apparent, in spite of the dress of heavy stuff and the soft wool shawl, with its gay-colored pattern of flowers on a background of white, that was drawn tightly about her, the ends tied behind her slender waist.

"Carry that branch higher," she was saying to Eph's assistant, who was perched on a ladder placed against the upper window-sill.

The judge went closer to her, and spoke as gently as his habitual habit of command would allow.

"Why do you not leave this work to the servants, Margaret?"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, starting, "I didn't know you were here, George." She spread her hands with a half-timid, half-humorous gesture, and held them up laughingly. There was a touch of emotion in her voice, which she tried to prevent. "I know you don't like to have me do these things, but I love to be in the open air. Isn't it a glorious morning?"

"Yes," the judge said, gathering his cloak across his breast.

"Look, George," Mrs. Wright went on. "I always wish to make sure of this one bush. It will be *so* beautiful in a little while."

The judge turned away. "It is always beautiful in its season. Please yourself, Margaret. Pardon me for questioning your choice of occupation."

"Thank you, George. You are always considerate," Mrs. Wright replied, sincerely, for to her the judge's manner did not convey a sense of unkindness; but to him, as he walked deliberately along the winding path, in and out among the trees and shrubs, towards the main avenue of the grounds that circled from the gateway up the knoll to the hospitable-looking entrance of the mansion, there was an unintentional rebuke in her words. He saw a vision of himself; not as the world saw him, but as he knew himself behind the mask of custom. Was he deserving of that tribute? Was he considerate of her? Was he ever considerate of any one? He asked these questions, as he had asked them a hundred times, and found no answer, save in a tinge of self-reproach. He had given her a home; but was there not something more demanded of him? And little Jimmy—her boy—who had planted that bush, and whose untimely death still brought that look of tenderness into the mother's eye! It was too late now to think of making his life more happy. But the mother—?

He faced about at the gateway and saw her still following him with her eyes—saw her draw off the misshapen glove and kiss her hand to him. He gravely lifted his hat, with the air of a courtier, and slowly turned eastward, out on the earth sidewalk, with its border of grass and row of shade trees, that led to the village of Sandy Hill.

When he had gone from view, Mrs. Wright called Eph Larrabee to her, giving him her final orders.

"Be very careful," she said, "that this bush is properly attended to. You know how highly I prize it."

"Yes, ma'am, I do, indeed," he said. "Seems to me's if that little man was right back here again every time the spring sends new sap into these here vines."

"My precious boy is always with me in my thoughts," she said, with a quaver in her voice, as she walked quickly away.

Eph stood stroking his stubbly chin until she disappeared in-doors.

"I swan," he said to the man, "I hadn't no intention o' hurtin' her feelin's, no more'n nothin' in this world. I guess she won't never get over thinkin' o' little Jimmy. She keeps his close packed away in the garret, they say, an' cries over 'em rainy days. I remember when Jimmy planted that there rose cuttin'. Three years ago, just 'fore he took sick and died. I swan! to-day's his birthday, sure's I'm alive. Never thought o' that when I spoke's I did. How time does fly! Little Son would be a big boy now, if he'd 'a lived. Brightest little chap I ever knowed for a fourteen-year-old. But them's the kind that gets through early."

He gathered up his tools. "Say," he said, "we'd better hook up an' get a load o' hick'ry from the wood-lot."

And when they drove away his mind seemed still to be running on the unintentional pain he had caused Mrs. Wright.

"Gid dap!" he cried to the horses. "Does beat all, how queer wimmin folks is!"

Judge Northcote, in the mean time, had gone on to the village, which lay within walking distance east from Elmhurst. He observed that the old post-road, now transformed into the one main street, was moist, showing that the chill of winter still lingered in the frozen ground; but there were signs of promise in the sky.

He reached the Episcopal church, which was nearest to Elmhurst, as if to proclaim the approval of the Northcotes, but far enough from all other churches to maintain its dignified divergence in theological opinions;

he passed the cottage of Dr. Whittaker, next the rectory, pausing to exchange a word or two with the village physician, who was just driving away on a professional call, and then continued on, beyond the Graham homestead, bowing right and left to his acquaintances until, at last, he reached "the Corners," where the old post-road of early days was intersected by the cross-roads of the wilderness.

Here, on the north side of the street, stood the old colonial inn, with its wide porch. The post-office adjoined the inn on the west; and next to this were the few stores, through the small-paned windows of which could be seen the conglomeration of indiscriminate merchandise.

The judge stopped at the post-office to get his mail, and to observe courtesies with the leading citizens—especially with the Rev. Rufus Coulter, rector of St. John's.

On the other side of the grass-grown street, opposite the inn, was a two-story stone building, on the ground floor of which was located the office of the *Sandy Hill Weekly Sentinel.* A narrow doorway, reached by three stone steps that projected onto the sidewalk, gave access to a small hallway leading to the editorial sanctum in front and the printing-office at the rear.

In this quaint old building, with its deep-set windows, was Judge Northcote's office, for although a judge by title, Mr. Northcote was no longer on the bench, nor even in the active practice of the law. The title, however, was popularly retained because it befitted him, precisely as his knowledge of the law rounded out his scholarship, and, in truth, went far to make of him the man he truly was. He had become a publisher by accident, not through design: A loan made years before to a struggling printer, who had founded the *Sentinel* at this crossing of the highways, and then passed on to oblivion, had brought to him an opportunity to experience the pleasure of refined diversion without imperilling the Fairfield view concerning trade or occupation.

When the judge had finished his conversation with the rector—his lightest talk in public was never less than dignified conversation—he flung his cloak back, holding his handful of letters and papers before him, like documents of State, and carefully picked his way across the street, avoiding the mud and tiptoeing on the unhewn stepping-stones up to the door of his office.

As he attempted to enter the place, his way was blocked by a ragged, barefooted boy who was lying asleep on the doorsteps.

The appearance of the child offended him.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

The boy sprang up, pulled a tattered cap from his tousled head, and said:

"Are you Judge Northcote?"

"Yes."

"I'm waiting for you, sir."

"For me? From whom?" He looked the boy over austerely, taking in every uncouth detail, from the mass of tangled blond hair, the hunger-pinched cheeks, the alert blue eyes that seemed to be watching for a pursuer, the dirty woollen shirt and frayed trousers, down to the swollen, frost-bitten feet.

"I've come to ask you to help me, sir, if you please," the boy replied, looking directly into the judge's eyes. "Any kind of work, sir." Then, catching a nod of refusal, he added, eagerly, "I can do anything on the place—or garden—or horses. I'm a hard worker, sir."

"I do not need more help," the judge asserted, pushing the boy aside.

The child held out an imploring hand.

"Mr. Larrabee said you always had lots to do on your place, sir, and I thought maybe—"

"Larrabee?" the judge interrupted with a frown. "Did he send you here to me—in this condition?"

"No, sir. I heard him tell Mr. Jacobs so, one day when he stopped us on the road and asked if we had any potatoes to sell. I helped unload 'em in the barn cellar—"

"Jacobs? Who is Mr. Jacobs?" asked the judge.

"He is—I mean, he *was* my master."

The judge tossed both flaps of his cloak back, shifted the mail to his left hand, took the boy's chin in his gloved right hand, and turned the little peaked face to the sunlight.

"Your master? You are not a negro; you are a white boy."

"Yes, sir, but he was my master, just the same. I'm bound out to him till I'm twenty-one, but I've run away."

"Oh!" said the judge. "Why did you run away?"

The boy's hands clinched and his lips grew firm.

"'Cause he hit me with a trace-chain."

"A trace-chain?" the judge repeated, doubtingly. "What had you done to make him do that?"

"I guess he was drunk," the boy said, drawing in his breath tremblingly. "He 'most always is when he comes home from town."

Northcote's brows contracted.

"Jacobs, you say? What Jacobs—William Jacobs?"

"No, sir," the boy said, quickly. "It's Bill Jacobs. Up on the mountain road."

"Precisely so," the judge remarked, pursing his lips. "Truly, we form our own status."

He placed the packet of mail on the window-ledge and drew off his gloves slowly. The lines between his eyes deepened in evident interest.

"I think I know the man," he mused. Then, in a tone of command: "Tell me the truth. What did you do to make him strike you?"

The boy shrank back; his voice dropped to a whisper.

"I called him a whelp."

"Ah!" said the judge, as he lifted his white hand to conceal a twitching of the lips. He noticed that the boy was not watching him, but stood with eyes turned to the ground. "Are you used to such an interchange of courtesies?"

"He's called me that a good many times," the boy said, twisting his cap into a tight ball.

"Probably, if I have the man correctly in mind. And this was said before he struck you?"

"But he'd broke Tag's back, sir, and that's what made me say it," the boy flashed out, lifting his head in confidence and striking his cap across his hand.

The judge took out his snuff-box—an unusual proceeding for the street.

"Now we're getting at the case," he said, with the instinct of the cross-examiner. "Tag? A dog, you mean?" He inhaled a pinch and snapped the atoms from his fingers.

"Yes, sir, and he was the only friend I had. Jacobs kicked him to death."

The judge saw that the boy's eyes were glistening through tears. "But you haven't improved matters by running away," he suggested, dropping the box in his waistcoat pocket.

"It couldn't be no worse. I'll catch it, anyhow, I guess."

The boy was shifting from foot to foot, to relieve his pain. This sight, as a proof of discomfort, irritated the judge and brought his mind down from abstractions in the law to realities in fact.

"You walked here, over the frozen ground, more than twenty miles?" he asked, sternly.

The boy stopped shuffling his feet. He straightened in pride.

"I didn't mind that, sir. I'm used to it. Anyhow, I was bound I'd come and see you, if I had to crawl here every step." He looked up in surprise at the sound of a murmur in the judge's throat.

The great man did not try to conceal the fact that a boy who was too proud to admit such suffering—who could pay such ingenuous tribute—was a boy worth talking to on the public street.

"How old are you?" the judge asked, in a tone of approval.

"I'm thirteen, sir."

"And you're bound out until you are twenty-one. That is a long time; but the law is against you in what you have done. Jacobs can take you back—"

"He'll have to get hold of me first," the boy interrupted, fiercely. "I wish I was twenty-one—I wish I was a man—"

"Why?" Again that snuff-box was in sight.

"I'd have it out with Jacobs, law or no law. I don't stand no show at all now. He keeps telling me, just as you do, that the law is all on his side. You are a judge—you make laws. Ain't there no law made for boys?"

Northcote studied this new type of boy through half-closed lids.

"What is your name, my boy?" he asked.

"Martin Brook, sir."

"Go into the printing-office," the judge said. "It is warm there, at least, and I will think this matter over."

Northcote gathered up the mail from the window-ledge, turned as if to speak again, reconsidered that thought, and then passed up the steps and into his sanctum, shutting the door behind him.

Chapter II

LEFT alone on the street, Martin waited a moment and crept up the steps, along the outer hall, and so, unopposed, into the printing-office. The foreman looked questioningly at the shrinking bundle of humanity, and stopped in his work of locking up a form long enough to say, "What do you want?"

"I'm waiting for Judge Northcote, sir," Martin said, taking off his cap. "He told me I might come in and get warm." And so, obedient to authority that bore the stamp of kindness, Martin patiently awaited a summons from the judge.

He sat low down by the big box-stove, his bare feet thrust out towards the comforting warmth. A fire was still needed in the office, and its humming was music to his ears. Everything about him was strange.

His feet ached and burned, but he did not dare to move or speak. He glanced timidly around the room, with a feeling of awe, as he sat, open-eyed and open-mouthed, watching the men at work making a newspaper. He thought of the dog-eared primer and the battered Webster's Speller which he had left in the garret at home. Home? He should never go back there any more—he hadn't any home.

He wondered if these men would let him take a paper. He was sure he could read it if they would let him try. But he dared not ask for it. He felt benumbed. His thoughts wandered vaguely. It seemed years since he had started away. He grew faint and hungry—

he hadn't thought of that before, or of where he was going to get something to eat; but now the animal instinct for food asserted itself. The heat from the stove, the closeness of the room, the smell of ink and paper stifled him after his hours of exertion in the open air. He became aware that the room was slipping away from him—that he was slipping away from himself.

He remembered brokenly, with sudden starts, how he had spoken—with some one—long ago—and how much courage it had taken to do it—to speak to a great man—somewhere—on the street. Or was it in his mother's room, by that still figure under the white sheet? He had tried to do right—to obey her.

A sound roared in his ears. It lifted him. He clambered up on its trembling steep, out of darkness. He heard a voice calling out:

"Where's Judge Northcote?"

A man came stamping into the office, splashed with mud, a heavy riding-whip in his hand—Jacobs! It was Jacobs, and the sight of him recalled the boy to life. He slid from his seat and out of sight behind a rack of type-cases.

"Where's the judge?" Jacobs cried. "My boy's run away, and I want to advertise him—or do suthin' to get the law after him."

"What kind of a looking boy is he?" the foreman asked.

"Oh, just one of them sneakin' little whelps. If ever I lay hands on him again he won't want fur markin's, I tell you—puttin' me to all this trouble and everything."

The man cracked his whip in the air.

"I don't know where he's gone," the foreman said, "but there was a strange boy around here a minute ago—said he was waiting to see the judge—a barefooted, hungry-looking chap, in a ragged blue shirt—"

"That's the one," Jacobs assented, nodding his head; but, instantly correcting himself: "I mean, he ain't starved—he eats enough for a dozen."

At that moment Judge Northcote came into the room and handed a bunch of copy to the foreman. The sight of him gave courage to the lad. He darted from his hiding-place and ran to the judge, crying:

"That's him! That's Mr. Jacobs! Don't let him take me! Please don't let him take me, sir!"

Northcote put a hand protectingly on Martin, with an involuntary movement, as Jacobs started towards him, with whip uplifted.

"What's that you say?" he cried, trying to get at Martin, who was crouching behind the judge.

"Wait a moment," Northcote said, calmly, facing the blustering man. "Explain what this means."

"Why, judge, you see, it's just like this; my boy's been cuttin' up, and I—" Jacobs paused, letting the whip hang limp.

"Your boy? Are you his father?" Northcote asked.

"Well, it's all the same. He's mine by *law.*"

"And you treat him as a father should?" the judge replied, with fine sarcasm.

"That's just it; exactly so," Jacobs whined. "There ain't no kinder master in the county than I be." He moved about a step or two. "I dunno how he comes to be here—but it's saved me a heap o' trouble, not havin' to look fur him."

Martin watched the judge's face; he saw no sign of sympathy.

The door was open, and he crept towards it, hoping for a chance of escape, but Jacobs grabbed him, with an oath.

"No, you don't!" he cried, flinging Martin back in the room. "See him, judge, trying to sneak away like a varmint!"

"Let us talk this over," the judge said, taking Martin by the arm and leading him into the front office.

Jacobs followed them sullenly.

Through the window could be seen his horse, restlessly pawing at the earth, the reins thrown loosely over the post.

"There ain't nothin' to talk over, judge," Jacobs asserted. "This youngster is bound out to me—and here's the paper." He thrust out a soiled document. "I thought I'd be obleeged to put the officers on his track, or advertise him, so I fetched it along."

Judge Northcote took the paper gingerly and filliped it open. It was the usual formal renunciation of guardianship by the father of the boy, legally transferring his services to this man for a term of years. It was an evidence of literal bondage. The judge simply glanced at it, and tossed it on his desk. It fell open; and there, on the grimy page, as if written in red, stood forth the promise of kind treatment by the master.

"'This indenture witnesseth,'" the judge read slowly, as he stood looking at the document, "'that the master shall be humane—'"

"And so I be, judge; so I be," Jacobs urged.

"You have never treated him cruelly? You have never beaten or abused him?" the judge said, with no attempt to conceal his disfavor of the man.

"Has the little whelp been tellin' you that sort o' stuff?" Jacobs asked, glaring at Martin, who stood trembling by the side of the judge. "Why, that boy ain't worth his keep. I'm obleeged to push him on, once in a while."

"His keeping doesn't seem to have cost you very much," the judge remarked, looking at the boy's bare feet and ragged clothes. "He's worthless to you, and yet you want him back."

"Well, you see, it's just like this: spring work's comin' on, and I've had him on my hands all winter, lazin' 'round, and—" The man hesitated.

"Yes?" the judge prompted.

"Well, anyhow, he's *mine;* and you're lawyer enough to see I've got my case. The law, judge, the law!" Jacobs declared, nodding his head and shaking his whip.

Mr. Northcote sat down at his desk and tapped his snuff-box. After a moment of silence, he handed the paper to Jacobs.

"You are right," he said. "The law is supreme. Besides, I have but the word of a child against the written record of a father's faith in you."

The irksomeness of annoyance outweighed his momentary concern in a nice point of law. He turned towards Martin: "You must go with Mr. Jacobs."

"Go with me? I should say he must!" the master said, moving threateningly towards Martin, and pointing to the window. "Get out o' here! Get out o' here and watch that horse. He's champin' things to pieces."

Martin gave one despairing glance at the judge—the man who had seemed so great—and dragged himself on his swollen, bleeding feet out of the room, across the stone steps of the doorway, and over the cold walk. Looking back, he saw the judge watching him through the window. Jacobs was gesticulating and pounding the air with a knotted fist.

The boy realized that he had tried for freedom and had failed. He knew that to go back with this man meant a harder life than he had ever known before. It meant a terrible whipping at first, and—Tag wasn't there to comfort him. The impulse to escape was still on him. Why not make one more break? They couldn't catch him. He could hide. Why not run—anywhere—down the street and towards the open fields?

He started to run, but the horse, a small, vicious brute, laid back his ears as the boy approached, and jerked suddenly away from the post, breaking the reins. Martin instinctively sprang to catch them. In doing so he struck his bruised foot on a stone and fell upon one knee. The horse instantly whirled and reared, with open mouth, and lunged towards Martin with his forward feet, but missed him, and reared for another plunge just as Jacobs dashed across the walk and seized the bridle, wrenching the horse to its haunches.

With an oath the man turned upon Martin and brought the butt of the riding-whip savagely across his face.

Judge Northcote had followed in time to see the blow descend. Hurrying forward he picked Martin up from where he lay half stunned in the gutter and placed him on the walk.

"Stop!" he said, confronting Jacobs. "This boy shall not go with you."

"Won't go with me, eh?" roared the infuriated man. "Well, I guess he will, and I'll pound him every step of the way, the little whelp!"

Northcote saw that a crowd was gathering in the street. Every window within range held a face. It was no longer merely a question of a boy's rights—it had suddenly become an issue of supremacy between Judge Northcote and a vulgar tyrant. He drew the boy nearer to him.

"I say he shall not go with you. I place him under the protection of the law."

"Yes," sneered Jacobs, "and didn't ye say a minute ago I had the law on my side? A pretty judge you be, goin' back on your own decisions." He faced the crowd and laughed. He felt the need of a defence. "He's stealin' my boy and pretendin' it's law."

"This boy is not a slave; he is an apprentice. You have no legal right to beat him," the judge replied.

"That's a lie!" Jacobs declared.

"It is the law."

"Law or no law, I'll have him!" Jacobs cried, springing forward. But the horse, maddened by the excitement, darted aside, dragging him to the middle of the street. His attitude was ludicrous. The spectators burst into derisive laughter as he awkwardly threw himself into the saddle, shook his whip at the judge, and yelled:

"I'll show ye what's the law afore I'm through with you!"

"At your convenience," the judge said, smiling, with lips drawn tight.

Jacobs curbed the horse for an instant, tried to speak, broke into an oath, and, wheeling about, dashed furiously down the street, and so forever out of Martin's life.

Judge Northcote attempted no explanation to the crowd. He set Martin on the doorstep, went into his office for his bell-crown beaver hat and cloak, and returned unruffled to the street. Distinguished and dignified as he always was in his immaculate attire, it was with more than customary dignity that he started towards Elmhurst, leading by the hand the limping, ragged boy, across whose tear-stained face lay a bloody mark.

On reaching home he sent for Mrs. Wright and awaited her arrival in the hallway.

"Margaret," he said, quietly, "here is a boy who needs some attention."

"Why, George!" Mrs. Wright exclaimed. "Who is he? Where did you find him? What *is* the matter with his face?"

Northcote wiped his gloved hands on his handkerchief, where Martin's fingers had left a stain. "Have you some clothing in the — the house — that can be utilized?" he asked, eying the boy with æsthetic disapproval.

"The poor child!" Mrs. Wright said, going to Martin.

"Have you something he can wear, my dear?" the judge insisted. "The servants may have—"

"Wear?" she repeated, speculatively. "I guess I can find some clothes—" She paused. Then suddenly: "Why, brother! I *know* where there is something that will just fit him! He's just Jimmy's size, and I—" She turned and left him, her eyes full of tears.

Chapter III

As Martin stood in the hall at Elmhurst, scarcely hearing the voices of the great people, dazed by the blow inflicted by Jacobs and the still more bewildering walk by the judge's side, it seemed to him that he had entered another world.

He passively followed Mrs. Wright into the servants' quarters, where he was given over to the care of the housekeeper. The commonest of Jimmy's clothes seemed to him the most beautiful garments he had ever seen. They were, it is true, the plainest of the jealously guarded relics in that chest in the attic, but Mrs. Wright had yielded them up with no slight pang. Still, the olive-green jacket, with full sleeves; the trousers that hung straight to the ankles from a belt at the waist; the warm white stockings and the low shoes, were a marvel to Martin.

In such a garb, and seated by the big fireplace, watching the orderly workings of that wonderful scene, where, he thought, there was more food in sight than any family could eat in a year, he often caught himself starting in expectation of reproof at his idleness. But slowly his heart took courage. The smiles and nods of the maids, the brusque inquiries of the cook—his first lessons in human sympathy—awoke his mind to unfamiliar sensations.

Before long, however, he began to taste the bitter in his too-abundant cup of comfort. His clothes burdened him; his shoes grew unbearable on his blistered feet.

The magnificence of his surroundings, the quiet dignity of the household, the amplitude of the place, oppressed him. He longed for the freedom of the accustomed —the privilege of occupation. He felt that he ought to be doing something; and after several vain attempts to summon his voice, he at last crept up to the cook, the person who impressed him most, and whispered, as he pointed to the stable-boy who was going to the barn:

"Please, ma'am, may I go with this young gentleman?"

"Young gentleman! Well, well, and what shall we have next!" the cook said, roaring with laughter, while the yokel blushed and guffawed.

Martin shrank back, the tears starting to his eyes. Blows and curses could not feaze him, but ridicule hurt him like the sting of a wasp.

"Go 'long with you, youngster," the cook said, "and don't be namin' folks out of their station."

She flung a laugh at the embarrassed boy that rankled in his mind as he walked slowly towards the barns; but once among the horses he felt himself upon familiar ground and took on courage.

He avoided the boy who had, unintentionally, been the means of his first disgrace; and, finding a spot in the great mow where he could be alone, drew off those tormenting shoes and threw himself down on the hay. Oh, the luxury of it! This must be what Mrs. Jacobs had meant when she told him about the rich folks and their comforts in life..

Martin had always been a dreamer of day-dreams—a believer in things unseen. To him the woods were full of invisible companions, and there were sounds in the winds that caused him to listen for voices. No one but Tag had known of this, but he had understood. Their dreams were a part of their real life, not terrifying, but helpful; and his love for Tag had made him a friend to all the race of dogs.

Here, safe in the barn, away from the dread of a cruel master, his thoughts turned to the dead mother who seemed always near him. Oh, if she could see him now, how happy she would be! She was not dead to him, for he remembered her as she looked, the last time he saw her, lying so still under the white sheet in the spare bedroom; and he always prayed to her at night, before he went to sleep. She had told him that, some day, the Good Father would give them all a home. He wondered what she meant, for his father hadn't done it; perhaps his father wasn't good; but now Judge Northcote had. And here he was, rich, happy, comfortable—all but the sore spot on his cheek, and his lame feet; but he'd get over that in a little while.

And, lying here on the sweet hay, he was suddenly aroused by the barking of dogs. He sprang up. A man was looking at him from the wide doorway; the figure seemed enormous against the background of the western sky. Two dogs, with hair bristling along their backs, were growling at him, as he slipped down from the mow to the floor.

"Well, I swan!" the man said. "If you didn't give me a scare. Thought you was a ghost in them close. Get out, Zeus! Get out, Juno! Guess I don't need none o' your help here."

The man went up to Martin and turned him round, examining him at every point.

"Where on earth did you blow from? Where'd you git them close?"

"Judge Northcote fetched me, sir. The lady give me these things," Martin answered.

"She did, eh?" the man said, sharply, holding the boy at arm's-length. "Give you little Jimmy's things. That's a likely story."

"It's true, sir," Martin declared, putting up an arm to shield him from the expected blow. But the blow did not fall. He looked up and recognized Eph Larrabee. With a cry of joy, he said, "Why, it's Mr. Larrabee! I've come to help you, Mr. Larrabee."

Eph threw back his head with a snort of contempt. "Help me?"

"Yes," Martin said, drawing away and eying him suspiciously.

The dogs came closer and sniffed at him.

"Where'd ye git that black eye?—been fightin'?" Eph inquired.

"No, sir," Martin said, turning his face from Eph and scraping his foot among the chaff on the floor. "Jacobs hit—" Then, in loyalty to his rescuer, "That is, he hit me 'fore Judge Northcote could stop him."

"Oh," said Eph, rubbing his chin.

"Yes, sir. Judge Northcote made him stop pretty quick, I can tell you!"

"He did, eh? And so you've come to help me?" Eph went on. "Well, I guess it won't be long 'fore you have my place, if that's so. Ye look as if ye had faculty. Who be ye, anyway?"

"I'm Martin Brook, sir. I come from Mr. Jacobs, the man you bought the potatoes of last fall. Don't you remember?"

"Well, I'm happy to make your acquaintance, but I don't seem to have much of a distinct rec'lection of havin' had the honor o' meetin' you before. What ye good fur?"

"Anything you want me to do. Shall I put up the team?" he asked, running to the horses in the barn-yard. The lines lay on the ground, where Eph had flung them.

The dogs looked at each other, and, with a bark of approval, started after the boy, wagging their tails.

"Here, what ye 'bout?" Eph cried, as Martin gathered up the lines to put them in shape. "Ain't goin' to leave that wagon in the track, be ye? Back her under the shed," he ordered, with good-natured contempt.

Martin tossed the lines over the horses' backs, and took the team by the bits. He cramped the wagon about and backed it under cover, while Zeus and Juno capered about him. He tied up the lines, unhooked the outer traces, and crawled fearlessly in behind the horses to unfasten the inside ones. He unbuckled the neck-yoke, and let the pole fall to the ground. He gave the horses a slap on their broad flanks as they started for the watering-tub, and ran on ahead.

"Got some nice dogs, hain't you?" he called out, as he struggled with the heavy well-sweep.

Eph looked on in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Which stall, sir?" Martin asked, when the horses turned of their own accord to the barn.

"Well," drawled Eph, "sence they're bein' handled by comp'ny, guess they'd better go in the double one. I never did like to cramp a double team in a single stall. Don't let 'em step on ye. Couldn't find ye in a week, ef they should git ye under one o' them hoofs."

Martin hurried after them, as the team went clanking into the barn. He pushed in front of them, slipped off their headstalls, and tugged at the big collars, the horses trying their best to help him, but only lifting him off his feet.

"Well, I guess you'll do, youngster," Eph laughed, coming to his rescue. "All you need is a little more height and weight. You got grit 'nough already." He forced the collars off and hung the harness on their accustomed pegs.

"Can I do anything more, sir?"

"I guess I'll do the rest of it, seein' you're so willin'. I knowed a feller once that broke his back by bein' too willin'. Now, run up to the house and tell the wimmin folks you're beginnin' to get hungry."

"I'm not hungry," Martin said, resenting the patronizing tone.

"Oh, you will be when you grow older; boys mostly is. I knowed a boy once dug out so thin that he could hold almost any amount. He was a relative to me on his mother's side," Eph explained, as he went whistling about, feeding the horses.

Martin stood in the doorway watching him for some time. At last he said, with a puzzled look:

"I don't know what you mean."

"By what, fer instance?"

"You don't *seem* mad, but you talk kind of queer."

Eph burst into a loud laugh. "Yes, I catched that along with the measles."

The two dogs came bounding into the barn at the sound of his voice, and rushed about. In their plunging over the floor, they came upon Martin's shoes and stockings. Zeus picked up a shoe, and Juno a stocking, worrying them like rats. Martin ran towards the dogs, but they eluded him and started towards the house, bearing their trophies.

Martin pursued, commanding them to stop. The faster he ran, the swifter they fled, shaking their heads and growling joyfully.

They reached the corner of the house and turned into the front path, but stopped suddenly, letting the shoe and stocking fall. Martin was almost upon them, when, with a bark of recognition, they leaped forward towards a little girl who stood by the portico-steps—a little girl in a white frock, with brown hair hanging down her back, and a beautiful blue ribbon about her. He heard the child utter a cry of alarm and clutch what seemed to be a huge doll tightly in her arms.

Then he heard an explosive hiss, and saw an animated bunch of yellow fur shoot from the girl's arms, flash across the grass, and streak up the nearest tree.

He saw the dogs dash to the tree, and, from the security of a branch, he saw a big yellow cat look down and spit disdainfully at them.

"Charge!" cried Martin, running up. The dogs dropped in their tracks. "Go to the barn," he ordered. With penitent eyes and drooping tails, Zeus and Juno slowly walked away.

"They didn't mean anything," said Martin, defensively. "They were glad to see you."

"Yellow Fellow wasn't glad to see them, I guess," the girl said, her lip trembling. "Come, kitty, kitty, kitty!" she called, going to the tree, still hugging the little white dress the cat had worn.

"What's that?" Martin asked, laughing.

"Why, that's Yellow Fellow's best dress. We were taking the air, and he's just as good as anything when those horrid dogs let him alone."

"Never mind," Martin pleaded. "He'll come down, and you can put it on him again."

"He won't come down all night," she said.

"I'll get him for you. Come, kitty!" But kitty wrapped his long tail snugly around him and settled for an indefinite stay.

Forgetful of his fine clothes, Martin climbed the tree. He reached the cat, and swung it over his shoulder; but, as he neared the ground, Yellow Fellow gave a flying leap and scurried into the house.

"Oh," said Martin, ruefully. "That's too bad."

"Never mind. I don't care, now that he's safe," the girl replied. "I can dress him some other day."

"Do you live here?" Martin asked, shyly, with a sudden sense of bashfulness now that there was no longer the need of action.

"No, but I come here 'most every day," she said, proudly. Then, noticing the mark of the whip on his cheek, she said, eagerly: "Why, you've hurt your face."

"No," he said, while the blood rushed to his cheeks. "That's nothing. I did that—I mean, it was done a good while ago."

"Did you fall out of a tree?" she asked.

"I fell down."

"Papa won't let me climb trees any more. Does your papa live here—in Sandy Hill?"

"No."

"Mine does. He likes to have me come here, to see Mrs. Wright. She's almost as good as my mamma was."

Martin turned and looked suddenly into her eyes. "Is your mother dead, too?"

"Yes," she said, softly. "Mamma died last summer."

"My mother died more than five years ago."

"I'm so sorry," she said, laying her hand on his arm. "What's your name?"

"Martin Brook," he said.

"Mine is Mary Whittaker."

Just at that moment Mrs. Wright appeared on the porch. She noticed the boy's bare feet, and the soiled appearance of his clothes.

"Mary," she said, "what are you doing there with that boy?"

Mary ran up the steps and into the front door, explaining as she went; but Martin recovered his shoes and stockings, and slowly returned to the servants' quarters.

Chapter IV

WITH the aid of Time, Martin won the hearts of his associates below stairs, here at Elmhurst.

He did not realize that he was doing this, in his willing helpfulness. He made no effort to gain their favor. He did not know how to do so He only went about his new work cheerfully, as he grew accustomed to the habits of the household, and by the unconscious exercise of gratitude was slowly lifted to a higher plane, still on the level of service.

His being at Elmhurst was the merest accident in the life of the family. Judge Northcote had forgotten the boy as easily as he had defeated Jacobs. But Mrs. Wright continued to watch him with an interest born of the coincidence of his coming here in need of just such help as could be rendered in little Jimmy's name on little Jimmy's birthday. This appealed to her as nothing else had ever done. The mother-heart, throbbing with an emotion which, she believed, could never be expressed in Judge Northcote's presence without causing a line or two to deepen in his face, found in this act of charity a quiet joy. Not that Martin could ever take the place of her own boy in her life—that thought never entered her mind. But he was a visible evidence, in his frank show of obligation, of the good that little Jimmy would rejoice to do were he still with her.

Besides, she did admit a pleasure in watching the spontaneous growth of independence in the child. He was so amenable to suggestion, so alert, so refined, so adaptable to the new conditions, so happy in the kindly atmosphere, that Mrs. Wright could not resist the inclination to take him from among the rougher out-door servants, and bring him into closer relations with herself.

There was very little work that he could do; and he was left with hours of idleness, if he chose to be idle. But he was not indolent; he craved activity and sought employment. He often annoyed her with the plea: "Isn't there something I can do?" So, to keep him occupied, Mrs. Wright used to put a book into his hands—for Elmhurst was a place of books—and tell him to improve his mind. Frequently she was surprised at his choice of books, as she came upon him in some obscure corner, with a volume on his knees, absorbed in a subject she thought must be far beyond his comprehension.

The servants also noticed this studious habit and laughed at him, while secretly approving of it. Nothing was too good to be expected of a servant at Elmhurst. The dignity of the family was strenuously maintained below stairs, and every servant was proud to be of the house of Northcote. Here, by the kitchen fire, the boy listened to stories of the family's greatness with silent awe, and here he grew to regard the judge with a feeling he could not put into words—the admiration of youth and ignorance for age and culture and courtly manners.

His quickened intelligence absorbed the teachings of the lower grade in this primary school of society, so that, before he had been three months at Elmhurst, he understood that Mrs. Wright was the only sister—the only living relative—of his benefactor; that she had married a poor man when very young, against her parents' wishes, and because of this had been cut out of her father's will; that Mr. Wright was dead, that her brother had opened the great house, which was closed for some time after the death of his father, Mr. Gerry Northcote, while Mr. George was travelling in Europe, and had given his sister a home; and that her son, "little Jimmy," had lived to be fourteen and was dead.

There were stories, too, of the former magnificence of Elmhurst, when Mr. Gerry Northcote was alive. His grand entertainments were the wonder of the times. But of late, since Mr. George's return, the older servants shook their heads in regret at the absence of guests. Notable men were sometimes here, to be sure, and then the rare wines were brought out; but usually there was no one except the Rev. Mr. Coulter, rector of St. John's, or Dr. Whittaker, the family physician, or a few friends from the village, while there might be the noblest in the land, if the judge would but say the word.

And the mansion, the housekeeper proudly declared, had been designed for entertainments, with its wide hallway and grand staircase in the centre of the main house; its parlors and drawing-rooms; its oak banquet-hall, and its transverse corridors on both floors, extending through the wings, and lighted by large windows at either end. But the rooms of state were seldom used, because the judge was not fond of society. The master occupied only the upper floor of the east wing, and Mrs. Wright the corresponding suite on the west.

Martin learned another fact that impressed him strongly. He was made to know that nothing must disturb the quiet of the judge's rooms. Mr. Northcote was generous, but severe. His library was especially regarded with respect. He was told that the care of it was always under the personal direction of Mrs. Wright, for fear the judge's order of arrangement might otherwise be disturbed. The servants affirmed that he could tell if so much as a single book had been moved from the spot in his library where he had laid it.

Thus the boy became imbued with the truth that, in the printing-office, as at his home, the judge's will was absolute, and the *Sentinel,* as a vehicle of ideas—George Northcote's ideas — devoted to his essays and disquisitions on the needs of the hour, was included in the objects of veneration by the retinue at Elmhurst.

As if in furtherance of this concept, it transpired, some months after Martin's arrival, that the judge, who had been absorbed for several days in the preparation of an essay on the "Potentiality of Cynicism," had read his thesis to the Rev. Mr. Coulter, and that learned gentleman had questioned the correctness of a quotation from "Richard III." The judge was positive of his own accuracy. He had, as usual, left the volume on the table in his library. A glance would suffice to confuse the rector. He started home, the observed of all, as he moved along the street, in his high beaver, with a wide, turned-up brim; his long swallow-tail blue coat, with a velvet collar that rolled away to reveal a light waistcoat and ruffled shirt-front; and wide light trousers that flapped above the ankle and showed the wrinkles in the pliable tops of his polished boots.

But it chanced that Mrs. Wright, more intent on domestic comfort than on scholastic studies, had taken advantage of her brother's absence from the house to throw open his rooms to the cool river breeze. She had directed Martin how to help in the work. He had brought great masses of roses for the vases in the judge's rooms, and Mrs. Wright, with the aid of Mary Whittaker, had done those trifles which a woman's loving heart alone could suggest to make the place delightful. Martin was thrilled with the honor of his duties and the gracious gentleness of his mistress. She had never seemed so kind to him. And when, having completed the task, and Mrs. Wright had retired, with Mary, to her own apartments, meanwhile bidding Martin to go down-stairs, he hesitated, and then crept softly back once more to the open doorway. He stepped inside the room. It was his first venture alone into the awesome place he had heard so much about.

In the centre of the library was the massive oak table the housekeeper had told him of—the one which the master had brought from Holland. The carvings puzzled him. He studied them breathlessly.

He felt as he did in Mr. Coulter's church. The mysterious hush of the unknown was about him. He listened for the voices he used to hear in the woods. His eyes slowly took in the scene. The fireplace, with its iron dragons, gaped at him, as if to protect the sanctuary from such invasion. The big bunches of roses, in the tall vases on the floor, filled the air with fragrance. The dark wood of the casings and doors; the mellow sunlight streaming through the small-paned windows of colored glass; the rich draperies; the paintings and bits of tapestry; the queer-shaped pistols and clusters of swords; the hundred objects on every side, appealed to the boy's imagination in a most bewildering way. They impressed him with a double weight: their own importance and his disobedience.

Step by step he moved along, gaining courage at each new discovery. The books, shut up in their cases, charmed him most of all. The delicious odor of the place, that mingled with the perfume of the roses, yet was distinct, and the subduing sense of ease, entranced him. He drew a long, trembling breath. It was intoxication. He lost the consciousness of self.

A book lay open on the table. At first Martin read and reread the words in sight. Then he turned a page. The book had pictures! He carried it to the window, in the farthest corner, where the shelving formed a niche, and sat down on the broad window-ledge, with the volume on his knees behind the curtains.

He was having his first sight of Shakespeare.

At this moment the judge entered the library, dignified even in his irritation at Mr. Coulter, going confidently to the table where his rare edition of the poet should be found. To his amazement, it was not there. He glanced angrily about, and then, crossing the room, pulled the bell-cord that hung near the mantel, summoning a servant.

"Is your mistress in her apartments?" he demanded.

"She is, sir."

"Inform Mrs. Wright that I desire to speak with her."

The maid ran along the corridor, and summoned Mrs. Wright, who responded quickly, as she always did to the judge's imperious requests.

"What is the matter, brother?" she asked, as she straightened a straying ribbon in her lace cap and smoothed the front of her pearl-colored gown.

"Margaret," the judge said, deliberately, "I left my volume of Shakespeare here, in its accustomed place. It is gone. Some one has disobeyed my orders."

"Why, brother," she said, "I am sure no one has been here since I—"

"And I am equally positive, Margaret, that some intruder has been here," Judge Northcote interrupted.

A slight noise attracted his attention. He looked in the direction of the sound. There was a rustling among the curtanis. A little face peered out for a moment, and was withdrawn.

An instant later Martin came forward, holding the book in both hands. His face was deathly white. He waited to gather courage, and walked bravely up to the judge. One glance at the master, and the boy's head drooped as it did that memorable day in the office.

The judge straightened himself, thrust a hand between the buttons of his waistcoat, and looked at the boy with a frown, changing into a sarcastic smile. Turning to his sister, he said:

"Ah! we are entertaining a scholar unawares! You see, I am rarely mistaken."

"Oh, Martin!" cried Mrs. Wright; "how dare you? How could you?"

Martin hugged the big book squarely before him, like a defensive shield. His lips were tightly compressed as the judge took the book from his arms.

"I trust," the judge said, with smiling sarcasm, "you find nothing to criticise in our poet."

Martin's chin trembled. A tear slowly traced a line down his pale cheek.

"Brother," Mrs. Wright pleaded, "please don't blame him. It was my fault. I left the door open. The day has been so warm, you know—"

The judge sat down, his back towards her.

Martin tiptoed out of the library; but once more in the corridor, feeling the freedom of escape, fled swiftly to his room.

Mrs. Wright paused at the door to say, "I am sorry you are disturbed, brother," and went slowly downstairs.

Safe in his little room, Martin flung himself, sobbing, on his bed, and buried his face in the pillow.

It was all over! He had lost everything! He knew that he ought not to have gone in there alone. They had told him so. But it was such a temptation. All those rows of books, the beauty of the room, the quiet. Oh, it was wonderful, wonderful! But it was all over now. Judge Northcote hated him; and Mrs. Wright had never scolded him before. It wasn't what she said—no, it wasn't that; but something! It was what the judge said, and the way he had said it—the way the judge had looked. It would have been easier if they had struck him; he could have stood a blow. But—but — he hadn't meant to do wrong. No — no; he hadn't meant to do any wrong.

Mrs. Wright went to Martin's room. He didn't hear her enter. She laid her hand on his head and he sprang up.

"Yes, I'll go!" he cried. "I didn't mean to do it; but I'll go. I won't wait to have him send me away."

She sat down on the edge of the bed and drew the little fellow to her, gently stroking his head, making no attempt to calm him with words. She let him sob his grief out in her arms. When he grew quieter, she said:

"You know, Martin, those are the judge's books, not the ones I permitted you to read. I told you he was very particular, and to such a man books are very precious. Why did you go into the library after I had told you to go down-stairs?"

"I don't know, ma'am. I ought to have minded you. But the door was open, and I thought it wouldn't do any harm just to look in. I never saw such a place before." His eyes, red and swollen, but wide with eagerness, were turned fearlessly towards hers now. "I went in, and I saw that book, and I wondered if I could read the words he reads. And the next thing I knew, I heard him coming. I was behind the curtains—and you know—" He broke down with a sob.

"Will you promise not to do it again, if the judge will forgive you this time?"

"Oh, I guess he won't forgive me. I don't deserve it. I ain't fit to be here," Martin burst forth.

"Perhaps the judge will not think quite so harshly of you. At any rate, before you go away, Martin, I wish you would do something for me. Would you—"

"I'll do anything for you—anything I can," he declared.

"Well, now, get the hammer and some tacks, and come out with me. You know the rose-bush under the library window—the one that was my little boy's? It needs training once more, and I want you to do it, because you are so light and spry. Eph is so big, and you can climb the ladder easier than he can."

Martin was on his feet before she had ceased speaking. He ran to the tool-shed, found the ladder and the tools, and carried them, stumbling under their weight, to the east wing.

Mrs. Wright followed, smiling at his earnestness. She noticed, as they reached the spot, that the judge's windows were still open.

Judge Northcote, sitting where Mrs. Wright had left him, his mind no longer troubled by the rector's comments, but turned in very different channels, became conscious of voices and tappings near his window. He crossed the room and looked down on Martin, who was laughing while he worked. The draperies concealed him from the busy boy.

"A sturdy boy, surely," mused the judge, as he watched the scene. "There must be a strain of good blood in him. He doesn't show a trace of the ragged urchin I saved from that brutal Jacobs. And this is simply the external change—the result of a little care and training and proper food. The stuff for improvement must have been there from the start. Any man might be proud to claim his parentage. Strong of limb, firm in the hips, quick of eye, and deft of hand—yes, a very good specimen of a wholesome boy. Fine head, too, with its mass of blond hair; but rather too full in the imaginative faculties—a trifle too sensitive in the full-lipped mouth; but the teeth are large and straight. Blue-gray eyes, under prominent brows—the brow of the observer. It's odd I have never noticed the boy before."

The judge turned almost fiercely from the window.

"Notice him?" he said, bitterly, as if replying to a cynical tormentor. "Is it my habit to notice boys? Did I notice little Jimmy until it was too late?"

He caught his breath sharply as he paced the room. "Whose fault is it that I am now alone—childless, friendless, a failure in life? Have I — philosopher, student of psychology, master of all the world calls desirable—have I been true to myself? Have I done my duty?" He flung himself into his chair, dropping his head on his hands.

"Poor little Jimmy! Absorbed in my own self, I had no place in my heart for the sister or the sister's child—until that moment when I was suddenly awakened to the fact that Jimmy was gone; the final hope of the preservation of my family was gone!"

He lifted his head with the gesture of one pleading his cause.

"No one knows how dwarfed my life is, and how I cannot hide this fact from myself. I have treated Margaret's love as the dust beneath my feet, and I have shut myself away from a personal thought of love and marriage. Children are born to millions. I am childless."

He started up and went to the window.

"And here is a boy — a waif — ignored, forgotten, thrust before my eyes by the hand of Fate. Is this a mockery?"

He drew the curtains aside.

Martin, startled by the sudden appearance, swayed and clutched at the ladder, as the judge said:

"Margaret, send this boy to me."

"Yes, brother," Mrs. Wright assented, promptly.

Martin dropped to the ground, the joy gone from his face, and appealed dumbly to her.

"You must obey," she said, firmly.

For the third time, Martin faced the judge. He was prepared for dismissal. Mr. Northcote was seated with his face in shadow, his handkerchief clutched in his hand, resting on his knee, while the boy stood where the light fell full upon him. The judge noticed, with curious interest, that there was neither shrinking nor defiance in his attitude—only an air of resignation.

"What shall I do to you?" the judge asked at last, touching his lips daintily with the handkerchief, and slowly replacing it in his coat pocket.

"You can whip me, sir."

"Haven't you been here long enough to learn that we do not whip boys?"

"They need it sometimes, sir," Martin confessed.

"Do you deserve a whipping?" There was recourse to the snuff-box now, but it was merely poised in his hand.

Martin felt the intent gaze of those cold gray eyes, but met it steadily. The judge waited for reply.

"I didn't mean to do wrong, but I did wrong," Martin answered.

"Ah!" said the judge, throwing back his head and gravely stroking his chin.

He tapped his box and inhaled a morsel, watching Martin intently. He waited to flick a bit of dust from his sleeve before he spoke again, and adjust the white stock about his neck. But when he spoke his voice was mild.

"Boy, where did you learn to read?"

Martin looked at the master, surprised at the tone. He felt that the judge was not angry.

"Why, sir," he said, "my mother taught me first, when I was at the old home, and then I found a few books in the garret at the—at the other place. But I've learned more since you brought me here. It's easy to read in this house, 'cause you have candles, and daytimes I ain't very busy."

The judge watched him with a puzzled expression as his voice rose to the high treble of confidence.

"Who told you you might take the books?" he asked, with assumed sternness.

"Oh, sir, not your books," Martin explained, "just the ones Mrs. Wright's got. She lets me take them, and she's kind to me—and—and I love her, sir." His voice trailed off to a whisper.

"You say you haven't much to do here. Idle boys always get into mischief," the judge went on.

"I'd do more if they'd tell me, sir."

The murmur in the judge's throat became quite audible.

"M-m-m! You say you love Mrs. Wright?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Come here." The judge suddenly held out his hand. Martin came shyly forward. The master drew him between his knees. He took the boy's head in both his hands, lifting the startled face into the full sunlight.

Martin was thunderstruck. Instead of blows and angry words, there was actual tenderness in the touch of the great man for whom he felt unspeakable awe.

"What is your father's name?" Mr. Northcote asked.

"Albert Brook, sir."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know, sir. He went to Pennsylvania when my mother died, and there wasn't any place for me to live."

"You never communicate with him?"

"No, sir."

"My boy," the judge said, after a moment of silence "would you like to give up the place where you are now?"

Martin looked pleadingly into his questioner's eyes: "If you can forgive me, sir, I'll never do it again—"

"I don't mean that," Northcote interposed, impatiently, pushing Martin from him. "I don't mean to send you away. I am speaking of the kind of work you are doing here. You say you are not kept busy. You say your father has given you up. Would you like to come into my office and learn to set type and be a printer?"

Martin's great blue eyes were blurred with tears of gratitude. "I'd rather do that than anything."

"I will arrange for you, and you may go to work, but you must know what this means. You will have to come as my apprentice. I require seven years of indenture. You may find me a hard master, as—well, not quite like Jacobs, perhaps. I'll not offend myself by saying that; but you will have to do all the disagreeable work at the office. In the end it will give you a trade by which you may live. Do you understand what I mean?"

Martin looked puzzled.

The judge suddenly recollected that he was arguing an imaginary case with his own nature, not talking to a boy under his complete control. He knew that work that soiled the hands was impossible to him, and he smiled as he thought of this plea with his own tastes.

"Do you understand my—my orders?" he said, more sternly, in self-defence against this child's searching look.

"I think I do, sir," Martin answered. "But whatever you say is right. I'll do the best I can."

The judge threw himself back in his chair and looked long and intently at the boy. Not one word of complaint, of bitterness, of questioning had this strange child uttered. Where was that spirit of revolt he had shown towards Jacobs? Where that gleam of defiance when he was found in the library? Now there was only obedience, gratitude, and acceptance of authority in patience.

The boy was, indeed, worth the effort of a little studying.

"I think it would be well, Martin," the judge said, as though speaking to an equal "if I gave you instruction in a simple way. I shall require of you an hour a day to recite such lessons as I may select for you to learn. That is all." He motioned towards the door.

Martin went out and softly shut the door. Mrs. Wright was waiting in the corridor. He flung his arms about her, nestling close in her embrace, and sobbed:

"He's forgiven me, ma'am! And he's going to make me a printer, and he's going to teach me, and I think he's the greatest and best man that ever lived!"

Chapter V

WHEN Judge Northcote told his sister of the new plan for Martin's advancement, Mrs. Wright said, with a preening motion of approval: "You'll not find the boy lacking in appreciation, George. I have noticed his brightness and willingness."

And so it proved. For although Martin was not admitted to the family table, he was not only lifted above the level of domestic service, but given opportunities for study. In the work at the printer's case, and in the sanctum, where he recited his lessons, he showed, in every way, a sense of gratitude and a readiness to learn.

The encouragement given him necessarily made him more self-reliant. He proved this quality by becoming a leader among the village boys in out-door sports; but his chief fame with them lay in his skill as a swimmer.

While he was never boastful nor quarrelsome, and avoided a fight if possible, he was always ready for a friendly wrestle on the green. But, in the fortunes of this peaceful pastime, he one day lost caste by silently enduring an insult from the village champion. He had fairly thrown his opponent, when the boy became angry and called him a bad name. Under the unwritten code, no boy who could fight would stand that; yet Martin had left the playground without proposing battle.

One afternoon, shortly after this loss of standing, Martin came whistling along the office hall to the street door, happy and contented. He no longer wore Jimmy's clothes, but was neatly fitted by the village seamstress. But this was not the cause of his good-nature now. He had this very day made a record as a compositor. There was a tradition in the *Sentinel* office about a certain "tramp" printer who had set more than a thousand ems an hour. The story was the incentive for every new apprentice. Martin had beaten that "string." He had set eleven hundred ems an hour, and had "kept it up" for four hours. It was rapid work for a boy of fifteen, and he was proud of the showing. His reward was the silent approval shown by Judge Northcote—that slight pursing of the lips and lifting of the brows that meant more than words.

Martin stopped on the office threshold and looked up and down the street, like a victor at peace with all the world. It was a matter he couldn't speak of to any of his boy associates, because typesetting was a mystery of the craft that might be discussed intelligibly only with fellow-craftsmen. But he knew that Mrs. Wright would understand and rejoice when he told her of his work, without asking what an "em" was, or why "a thousand an hour" need be called a proof of his proficiency. He knew that she would comprehend and appreciate his skill, because the judge himself had evinced satisfaction.

Martin's appearance in the doorway was evidently the signal for a most surprising demonstration. A crowd of boys came scurrying towards him, like a pack of fox-hounds out of leash. They issued from every hiding-place at once, with shrill calls, and swarmed around the office. They overran the street. They gathered at the curb before him, and formed a compact group. The smaller boys darted about the outskirts of the noisy crowd, panting with eagerness.

Martin looked down on them, his hands in his pockets, curious and smiling.

"What's the matter, boys?" he asked. "Got a new game?"

"There he is! Here he comes!" shouted a little fellow in the middle of the street, as the village bully swaggered up and stood in the gutter opposite to Martin.

"Say, Martin," yelled a boy, "here's a feller wants to see you."

"Well," said Martin, "if he ain't blind, I guess he can see me here."

A laugh went up from the scuffling, dancing crowd—the laugh of a mob in miniature.

Martin's face grew grave as he took in the meaning of this shout. It was not a new game, then, that confronted him, but the old game of supremacy. His gaze ran quickly over the group: the central figure of the village fighter, in his blue hickory shirt with splashes of red on the sleeves — the village butcher's apprentice, who could throw a calf or swing a sheep on the shambles with any man in the shop; next, the boy with a stone bruise on his heel, who limped as he ran; and the boy with a thorn in his grimy toe, sitting on the curb and scowling as he pulled the sliver out; the indifferent boy, who had been whipped by the bully and had lost caste, and who was shying a stone at a passing dog; and then his eyes came back again to the bully. He was two years older than Martin, heavier by twenty pounds, and broader in the hips. His bare arms, where the sleeves were rolled to the shoulders, were muscular, and his face was hard. The square jaw was thrust out, and he was biting at a black twist of sailors' tobacco.

"That won't make *him* sick," asserted an admirer.

"Naw, but you can't chew," sneered another. "I can if I want to—but I don't want to."

"'Cause your father licked you," yelled a third.

A big boy stepped to the front, like the herald at a tournament.

"Say, Martin, Butch is goin' to lick you! Ain't you, Butch?"

Butch pulled his cap over his left ear and spat contemptuously.

"I guess not," said Martin, quietly. "It takes two to make a fight."

"Aw!" rang out a derisive chorus.

"Well, he *can* lick you, anyway. Can't you, Butch?" the herald affirmed.

The champion fighter turned his head on his short thick neck, but deigned no reply. His defiance bore the insolence of supreme contempt. He posed before the boys as a gladiator before a Roman host. His record was without a flaw, and his standing challenge was known of men.

Martin grew pale. There was a tingling sensation up and down his spine, and a hot pounding at the base of his brain. The look of gratified intelligence faded from his eyes. He was no longer the victor at peace with all the world.

Martin knew that Judge Northcote could hear the threat. The office windows were open. The sound of his footsteps was audible as the judge crossed the room and came in view of the crowd. The boys under the windows skulked down and ran crouching in different directions. Martin listened for his master's voice ordering the boys away; but the judge was silent.

The butcher's boy ducked his head and assumed a more offensive attitude. He actually looked Judge Northcote in the face. "Lick him?" he sneered. "I kin lick him any day in the week."

"What are you going to lick me for?" Martin asked.

The champion gave a snort, and spat again on the ground. He turned towards his audience, grinning in reply: "He wants to know what fer!"

The boys, squatted on the curb, or standing in the road, were in no hurry to begin the show. The defiance and delay was a part of their greatest pleasure. Keen enjoyment was manifest in every face. Some of the urchins, as they sat, were scooping the dust of the gutter about their feet and kicking it into the air, showering each other with it.

"Aw, stop that," cried one, "or I'll smack ye!" He jumped up and skimmed a stone at a venturesome bird in the big elm by the inn corner. The spirit of destruction was rife.

The bully pulled himself together. "I'm goin' to lick you, sissy, 'cause I kin; that's what I'm goin' to lick you fer!"

Martin started down the steps. "I don't want to have any trouble with you," he said, calmly.

The judge was closing the windows. A moment later he came out, walked through the crowd without speaking, and went towards Elmhurst.

"That's right, sissy," said the butcher's boy. "Better go home with him, hadn't you?"

Martin did not stir.

The boys, now that the judge was gone, began to form a circle about the pair. One of them pushed a little fellow against Martin, almost upsetting him, and darted away to a chorus of yells.

A number of men, congregated near the inn porch, were watching the affair. To Martin it seemed as if the eyes of the world were upon him, and that he was friendless.

"I tell you," he said, firmly, "I don't want to fight. There isn't any quarrel between us."

"Naw, is that so?" the bully said, mockingly. He picked up a chip and laid it on his shoulder. "That's my quarrel. Knock it off, if ye dare!"

Martin slowly moved away, pushing the boys aside to force a path.

"He's afraid!" the boys screamed. The crowd took up the chorus: "'Fraidy! 'Fraidy! 'Fraid-cat! 'Fraidy!"

Martin became conscious that a strange boy, smaller than himself, was walking by his side and looking up into his face, with ingenuous curiosity. He turned, half angrily, on this intrusion that was harder to bear than the taunts of his own associates.

"Why don't you lick him?" the boy asked.

"Who are you?" Martin said, stopping. The stranger was not like the Sandy Hill boys. He was well dressed, and wore neat shoes. He was a sturdy, red-headed chap, of about fourteen, but much too small for an encounter with the butcher.

"Oh," he said, "I don't belong here. Live in Troy. That's my father," pointing to a prosperous-looking man on the inn porch. "We're waiting for the stage. If that bully was in my street, he'd get what he needs."

The village boys had by this time perceived that Martin and the stranger were talking. A minute sufficed to show them a new situation. A boy in good clothes and shoes—and a stranger.

"Aw," they cried. "Look at the city buck! Look at the city buck!"

They circled about Martin and his companion, in a war-dance, turning cart-wheels and screaming their contempt for the stranger.

Butch eyed them with complacent superiority. "I kin lick 'em both to once and one hand tied behind me."

"Charley!" the father called from the porch.

The boy looked at the champion. "You come down to Troy," he said, nodding his head wisely, as he started to obey his father.

Butch ran up and grabbed the boy. Martin sprang between them, pushing the bully's arm aside. "Let him alone!" he commanded.

The champion's left fist shot out, catching Martin squarely on the cheek.

Martin staggered beneath the blow. A shout went up from the bully's admirers as he leaped forward to follow up his advantage. Martin recovered his balance and braced himself for the rough-and-tumble assault he saw must come. He knew that the champion's tactics were to hurl an antagonist to the ground, by main strength, and hold him there until he pleaded for mercy.

But, as Butch threw himself forward, Martin turned quickly to the left, wheeled on his heel, and brought his right arm in an upward circle, striking his foe full on the unguarded jaw. Butch lurched, regained his poise, and, with head bent low, dashed in once more. He seized Martin below the arms and lifted him from the ground. Martin grasped his enemy by the throat, and, with a sudden twist, bent him backward until his own feet touched the earth. Then, wrenching himself free, he struck Butch at short range in the pit of the stomach.

The bully dropped to his knees, looked up at Martin gaspingly, and fell, face downwards, insensible.

Martin stood over him, pale and trembling.

The men came running up.

"I have killed him!" Martin cried.

"No, you haven't," said the strange gentleman. "Here," he ordered the men, "carry this young brute up there. He will be all right in a few minutes." The men picked the unconscious boy up and laid him on the porch.

"Now, young man," the stranger said to Martin, "I saw the whole affair. If you ever need a justification, call on me. Perhaps your folks don't like to have you fight."

"What is your name, sir?" Martin asked.

"Robert Chichester, of Troy, and this youngster, who has been the cause of the fight, is my boy." He took the little fellow by the shoulder. "Charley, shake hands with— See, what's your name?"

"Martin Brook, sir."

"Yes; well, shake hands, Charley and Martin." The boys shook hands.

"I wish you lived in my street," Charley said.

The sound of the approaching stage-coach was heard. "There's the coach!" Mr. Chichester exclaimed. "We are going home. Tell your father, Martin—"

"Do you mean Judge Northcote, sir?"

"Oh," Mr. Chichester remarked; "oh, yes, I see. You're his apprentice?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'm sorry not to be able to call on the judge and tell him all about this matter; but please say to him that I present my compliments, and if he needs an account of it, I am ready to vindicate you." He patted Martin on the shoulder.

"Thank you, sir," Martin said, "but I shall tell the judge the truth." Then to Charley, with a smile: "I'll call on you the next time I need help."

"Help?" Charley replied in admiration. "I guess you don't need anybody's help. But it made me mad to see them all pitch on you. I wish I was as strong and spry as you are. Better come down to Troy and lick a few boys there."

The coach whirled up to the inn. Mr. Chichester and Charley climbed to the top. The butcher's boy was sitting, doubled over, on the inn steps.

"Feel all right now?" Charley called to him.

The humbled bully made no reply.

"Good-bye, Martin!" Charley sang out. "I sha'n't forget you."

Martin's good-bye was lost in the clatter of the departing coach. He waved his hand. The action made him wince. The hand was swollen and bruised.

He went up to his antagonist. "I'm sorry I hurt you so," he said.

The boy looked up at him.

"Say," he replied, slowly, "kin you learn me how you done it?"

"Yes," said Martin, good-naturedly, "if you want me to."

"Oh, I've had enough for one day."

Martin left him sitting on the porch and went home. He made up his mind to go straight to the judge and tell him not only of the fight, but why he had tried to avoid it—to avert the disgrace of such a thing. But at the gate he encountered Eph Larrabee.

"Hello!" cried Eph. "What's the matter with your face? Been through a fannin' mill?" Martin hurried along past the grinning man, who called after him: "I knowed a feller once had just such an eye. Got it in a fight—"

"Yes," said Martin, "and he licked the other feller, too?"

"Did he? I swan! We must have knowed the same one. I'm proud o' your acquaintance."

Martin went right up to the judge's rooms.

"I have been doing something wrong, sir," he began.

"You have been fighting?" the judge said, frowning.

"Yes, sir. I tried to avoid a street fight, because I think it beneath the dignity of this family; but the bully pitched on to a smaller boy and I had to fight."

The judge looked at the bruise on Martin's cheek and scowled at the appearance of his hands.

"And that butcher's boy whipped you?"

"No, sir," cried Martin, warmly, "but I was afraid at first that I had killed him."

"Oh," said the judge, tapping his snuff-box softly. "Will you explain your meaning?"

Martin told the story of the fight, and repeated the words of the gentleman from Troy.

"Mr. Chichester?" the judge mused. "A very fine gentleman. Yes. In the wool-trade, I believe. H'm! Well, my boy, I shall simply say that our mutual friend Shakespeare caused the eccentric Polonius to advise against entrance upon a quarrel, but when once a quarrel is thrust on us—you recall the lines, no doubt. By-the-way, is the boy fully recovered?"

"I think so," Martin replied, with a repressed smile. "He asked me to teach him how to do it."

"H'm! My boy, fisticuffs are very vulgar; but a change in social customs is noticeable everywhere." His eyes wandered to a brace of duelling pistols hanging on the wall beneath a pair of inlaid rapiers. He saw Martin's eyes follow him. "Yes," he said. "Family heirlooms. Quite out of use now—quite out of use. Still, it is sometimes necessary to instruct the commoner classes in a due reverence of the law. And it is also by the law that we are permitted to defend the weak and to maintain our own dignity. Walk within the law, my boy, and—well, if need be, compel others to do the same." He glanced at Martin's hand. "Perhaps an application of some lotion will relieve you."

"I'm afraid it will stop my type-setting for awhile," Martin lamented. "I was so proud of what I did to-day in the office; and now this miserable fight spoils it all."

"Perhaps so, for a short time, but you need not be concerned about it," the judge said. "Each day brings us the proper lesson."

He dismissed Martin by a wave of the hand, but evidently not the theme; for that night, mindful of his polite duties, he wrote a letter to Mr. Chichester, acknowledging his compliments. It was a formal message, in which appeared this sentence: "I have found a very interesting boy in this lad through whom you transmitted your friendly greeting. I think he is capable of winning in almost any form of contest; although, of course, I deprecate the present-day method of expressing prowess."

Chapter VI

WHILE the judge's manner towards Martin, after this affair with the butcher's boy, was unquestionably more considerate, his kindness was not the only benefit that ensued. Great as this good was, in the eyes of all, the practical advantage to him came all the way from Mrs. Wright, down through the entire household, to the lowest servant. Below stairs he had ceased to be counted as one of their number.

Those social barriers, too, which on the first day of his arrival sent him to the kitchen, when Mary Whittaker was taken in at the front door, were gradually disappearing in the family circle.

There was very little social life at Elmhurst, it is true, but there existed between the families of the rector, the doctor, and the judge an understanding which placed them all on the plane of visitors; and in their attitude towards Mary, Mrs. Wright and Mrs. Coulter were equally devoted to the motherless child of Dr. Whittaker. Most of Mary's leisure hours were passed at Elmhurst, and through this unavoidable association of Martin and Mary, although he was still an apprentice, they were permitted to become close friends. Whenever Judge Northcote nodded his head approvingly, no one thought to question him; and when the doctor, who was without caste prejudices, and as unconventional in his dress and manners as the judge was precise, joined in the judge's sanction of this friendship between the children, the matter was accepted by every one as right and proper. Martin came, in the natural order of things, to regard himself almost in the light of a brother to Mary.

The doctor, an avowed anti-slavery man, and the only person in Sandy Hill who ventured to dispute the rising national issue with the judge, approved of Northcote's action in rescuing Martin from Jacobs, and he often alluded to it in vindication of the theory of personal liberty.

For on Dr. Whittaker's part there was a feeling of admiration for Martin in that broader spirit of democracy which characterized him, and he had shown this on several occasions, but more convincingly than ever one day when Martin chanced to come into the sanctum in the course of business. As the boy quitted the room, the doctor, continuing his discussion with the judge on the slavery question, remarked:

"Now, judge, there's a boy after my own heart. He's a living illustration of the point I was making. You took that lad out of bondage. See what you have done for him. You have given him an opportunity, and he has improved it. He's bright, efficient, industrious, truthful—"

"But Martin had in him the materials for improvement," the judge said, pursing his lips.

"Very true; but we can say that of all human beings. Each develops according to the measure and quality of the materials within him. The principle is the same. All cannot become great men, but each should be given a chance to do the best of which he is capable."

"My dear doctor," the judge said, smiling, "you do not know the African race as well as I do. They were created for service."

"Then give them the opportunity for free service."

"Whenever the law so ordains, I shall be the first to observe it," the judge replied, conclusively. "I leave the question with our Southern friends, precisely as I approved of emancipation in our own State. It is a matter of climate and economy."

"I shall make my own laws on that subject," the doctor declared, stoutly.

"Be prudent, my dear sir," the rector interposed. "The judge is right in affirming the difference in the races. And, besides, we cannot always carry out an abstract theory in individual cases."

"Certainly not," the doctor replied, "so long as Church and State recognize the existence of caste and differences in race, while professing to teach equality and spiritual freedom."

About a week after this conversation occurred, as Martin was passing Dr. Whittaker's house, he saw Mary by the gate, and lifted his hat in cheery greeting; but she appeared anxious and perturbed.

"Martin," she said, "will you please come in a moment? Father is away, and there's some one here whom I don't know what to do with."

"A sick person?" he asked, entering the yard.

"No," she said, doubtingly. "A negro."

"What's he done?" Martin demanded.

"Nothing," Mary said, quickly. "He's in trouble."

"Oh, in trouble? Where is he?"

Mary led the way into the sitting-room. A negro in a ragged flannel shirt, tattered trousers, and worn shoes was standing near the long window that opened on the lawn. As Martin stepped up to him the man bowed low, sweeping the floor with his torn hat.

"What do you want?" Martin asked.

"Work, sah," the man replied.

"Where did you come from? Who is your master?"

"I's free, sah. Ole Enoch's free, sah."

"Free?" Martin repeated. "I know every black man in the village. You don't belong here. You look like a runaway."

"Sh—sh—hush!" the negro cautioned, looking about him. "I reckon you's got sharp eyes, sah."

"Are you a runaway slave from outside this State?" Martin insisted. The man looked inquiringly at Mary, who nodded reassuringly.

"Yes, sah," the negro said, "an' I reckon I kin trust you, sah."

"You can. What is that scar on your face?"

"Dat's whar de oberseer hit me, sah."

Martin's cheek flushed at the memory of a blow he himself had once felt.

"I will try to help you," said Martin, thoughtfully. He turned to Mary. "Does your father help runaway slaves?"

"He helps all who need help, Martin," she replied.

"When will he be at home?"

"Not before to-morrow. He was called on a serious case in the country," she said.

"I can't do very much," Martin mused. "But we mustn't leave him here."

"Don't you think that Judge Northcote would give him work?" she inquired.

"He wouldn't if he knew that the man was a runaway," Martin said. "I've heard him talk about the law. The law won't let us help a fugitive—that is, if his owner wants to get him back. It is a matter I don't quite understand."

"It is a wicked law," Mary declared. "Our own State has freed the slaves—or, rather, in two years more they will all be free in New York."

"How do you know so much about the law?" Martin asked in surprise.

"Father has often talked of it. He has papers that say so, too," she replied.

"That hasn't anything to do with niggers from other States," Martin said, as he crossed the room and stood by an open window, half conscious of the scene before him — the lawn, with its clumps of shrubbery and dense hedge that divided the doctor's yard from the Graham homestead. His mind was occupied with a problem new to him—the problem of a man's right to personal freedom. His own cruel experiences came trooping up before him. But his attention was diverted from the thought in mind by the appearance of Sidney Graham, who came out of the house, paused in the path, and looked over the hedge, as if to catch a glimpse of Mary in the doctor's yard.

Sidney Graham, who would some day be the richest young man in Sandy Hill, and yet the only one among the boys of the village for whom he had an instinctive aversion. Nobody liked him. He was the most unpopular boy in town. To the little barefoot democrats of the place he was known as "Dandy of Sandy," a term so indefinably opprobrious in the lips of the youthful Sandy Hillites that it was held to express transcendent contempt. He outraged the feelings of the boys by always being immaculately dressed, with an aping of his elders—a fashion-plate of style presumedly in vogue in Albany or New York, or somewhere beyond the personal acquaintance of the Sandy Hillites. He was an offender—always with the boys, yet never one of them. And the crowning insult to the village youths was his habit of carrying a little cane with a single eye-glass set in the handle. He had a way of holding it to his eye and gazing contemptuously at the boys until he drove them to aggressive fury. Now his presence awakened resentment in Martin, as he stood there evidently to attract Mary's notice. Martin watched him affectedly flick his sleeves with his gloves and go sauntering down the street.

Martin turned and looked at the negro.

"I'll tell you what to do," he said to the man. "Wait until you see Judge Northcote—that is he going along the street now—wait until you see he is alone in his office, and then go in and ask for work."

"Thank you, young marster."

Martin waited until the negro had walked away up the street, and then he passed on down to the printing-office. He could not get the man out of his thoughts. The look in those eager eyes, the soiled woollen shirt, the worn shoes and tattered trousers, recalled his own days of hopeless poverty. The man seemed older than he really was. His watchful manner was like that of a hunted animal, not a human being; and yet Martin was sure that the judge would be generous to him. Martin was in the back office, still thinking of this encounter, when, an hour later, a kinky head appeared cautiously in the open doorway of Judge Northcote's private office, where he was sitting, leisurely enjoying a morning pipe.

"I's lookin' fo' de marster, sah," the negro said, twisting and bowing.

"Well," the judge said, indifferently.

"I reckon dey ain't much doin' round yo' place jus' now, sah, is dey?" The grin broadened.

"What do you want?"

"Why, sah, ef you could fin' sumpin' fo' a 'spectable purson, I reckon I's dat," the man replied, with a wistful look.

"I haven't anything to offer you," the judge replied.

"Thank yo', sah. De young gem'man said you might be needin' some help 'bout de place—"

The judge crossed the room and flung open the door to the printing-office.

"Martin," he said, sharply, "did you send this fellow to me?"

"I met him by chance," Martin answered, coming into the sanctum, "and he asked me for work."

"Do you think I can furnish work for everybody?"

"No, sir, but I couldn't help remembering how you have helped *some* who needed your aid."

The judge looked quizzingly at Martin. He felt that he was being regarded with admiration, and that he must live up to the ideal. Besides, the experiences of the last few years had made him more tolerant of the needy.

"Well, well," he said, throwing himself into his chair, "I don't believe there is work for more servants."

"Elmhurst seems to be a place where there is always room for one more," Martin suggested.

"Elmhurst has its limitations," the judge replied.

"Not in its kindness, sir," Martin said. "There is no limit to that, and this poor fellow is in need."

Through Martin's mind ran the one thought of freedom—freedom to do honest work for just pay; freedom from blows that left a livid mark. His heart was filled with appreciation of his own release, and his voice rang clear with the note of human sympathy.

The judge looked at him in pleased surprise. The boy did value what had been done for him—a compliment which touched the inmost sense and confirmed Whittaker's opinion of the good that had been bestowed. Northcote turned to the negro with a show of interest, not for the man so much as for the boy.

"Where did you come from?" he asked.

"Down Albany way, sah."

"Are you free?"

"Yas, sah. I's my own marster now. I's free, sah."

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"Yas, sah—fo' de Lawd, sah."

The judge was silent a moment. Martin's heart beat hard and fast.

"Go up to my house and ask for Eph Larrabee, the gardener. He will give you something to eat and a place to sleep, for to-night, at least."

The negro bowed first to the judge, then more lowly to Martin, as he went out and started towards Elmhurst.

"My boy," Judge Northcote remarked, "it will be quite as well for you to be less emotional."

"I didn't mean any harm, sir," Martin replied.

"It isn't what we mean, but what we do, that determines our legal conduct. Our thoughts are our own; our actions belong to the public."

"Thank you, sir," Martin said. "I shall try to remember the lesson."

He returned to the office, wondering what the outcome would be.

Enoch had no difficulty in finding Larrabee; and it transpired, as was most likely when Eph's convenience was consulted, that there was work he could do—a corner he could fill in the Elmhurst service, where there was, indeed, "always room for one more."

The man became the doer of unconsidered odds and ends of work. He was always just within call, as he had been in his slave days. He did the right thing, and did it well, especially about the house, where he appeared to be more familiar with in-door than with out-door duties. And so, ready at any moment to assist the mistress, he assumed a place among the house-servants. No one appeared to claim him as a runaway—no mention of the past was ever made by him. Judge Northcote did not allude to his being there, or seem to carry a single thought of him.

For a few weeks there lingered in Martin's mind a feeling that perhaps he ought to have told the judge of Enoch's admission. In time, however, since no question was raised, this thought was finally dismissed.

Indeed, so minor a matter as this addition to the retinue of Elmhurst was not important enough to cause comment about the place; but Dr. Whittaker met Martin, soon after Enoch's appearance, and said:

"I want to thank you, my boy, for helping Mary out of what might have been a rather annoying incident. I always try to keep those poor devils out of sight, but this man Enoch is certainly a sharp and bold one. I sometimes help to push these fugitives on to Canada, and he must have heard of my former actions. How is he coming on?"

"Very well," Martin said.

"Does Judge Northcote ever allude to him?"

"No; Enoch seemed that day to convince Mr. Northcote of his freedom. Sometimes I fancy that he let himself be easily convinced."

"Possibly. I half suspect the judge of being broader at heart than he likes us to believe he is. You know he manumitted the slaves on his mother's estate long before our own laws were changed."

"Yes, but I blame myself for keeping this secret," Martin said, gravely. "I may do wrong in not telling the judge, but I know that Mrs. Wright likes the man, and he is really useful."

"I wouldn't let that secret trouble me, my boy," the doctor said. "I can afford to stab my conscience a bit in a good cause. It's like surgery."

"I should hate to do anything to harm Enoch," Martin said; "but you are aware how much I respect the judge. Enoch confessed to me that he was a fugitive—"

"Follow my advice," the doctor interposed, "and let some one else do the meanness of exposing the man, if it must be done. For Mary's sake, and for what she induced you to do, I'll stand between you and any possible misunderstanding with the judge."

"Thank you, doctor," Martin said. "You are always very kind to me, and so is Mary. She helps me in my studies, and she is—if you won't object to my saying it—she is like a sister—the only sister I have ever known."

The doctor looked at him sharply. "You'll never find a better one," he said, turning away.

Chapter VII

DURING the five years that elapsed between the coming of Enoch and the determining of Martin's standing with the judge, three incidents occurred that had a fateful bearing on his career.

The triumph over the butcher's boy had settled at once and permanently his right to leadership among the boys, and had given him a position of authority in their sports.

Because of this, one Saturday afternoon, when nearly every boy in Sandy Hill was down by the river enjoying a holiday, Martin, still in his teens, had taken a little fellow under his protection and was teaching him to swim. He had just guided his pupil to shore and was standing on the bank, when Sidney Graham came along, with cane poised daintily between his fingers.

"Hi, Sid!" yelled the boys who were splashing in the stream. "Pull off them pretty duds and come out here!"

Graham walked carefully to the edge of the diving-hole, avoiding the soiling of his boots, and raised his eye-glass. He surveyed Martin with deliberate offensiveness.

"No, thank you," he drawled. "I'm not swimming to-day—with printer boys."

"Umph!" snorted the urchin at Martin's side. "Martin Brook's as good as you be."

Graham stepped quickly to the boy and switched him smartly on the bare legs.

"I'll teach you to be civil and—"

But before he could finish the sentence, Martin caught him—cane, eye-glass, and hat—and with a swinging toss flung him head-foremost into the river.

Then, like a flash, he dived into the hole, seized the strangling offender, and brought him safely to land, while the polished beaver hat went spinning down the stream, and the cane with its eye-glass sank to the bottom.

A shout rang up from the group of swimmers. One boy grabbed the soaked hat and put it on his head. Another dived and recovered the cane, and, coming to the surface, treaded water, holding the eye-glass to his eye. The rest of the boys pounded and splashed the water in their glee, bursting into the taunting chorus:

"Dandy, dandy! He's so handy!
Take him home and feed him candy!"

Graham, absurd in his helpless anger, stood for a moment on the bank, watching the boys in their noisy contest for his hat and cane, and then, turning on Martin with an oath, cried:

"I'll pay you for this!"

"Oh, you're welcome to it," Martin said. But if he had known of the hatred he had created in Graham's heart, that reply would have been left unuttered.

His day's pleasure was spoiled. He was depressed by the incident, and went home feeling out of sorts with himself and the world. He was in no mood for reading. He decided on a tramp through the woods—a tramp with Enoch; that was the very thing to restore good-humor. Enoch's cheery spirit seemed always to be on speaking terms with nature, and he joined Martin with heartiest accord.

"I know whar days some big bass, Marse Martin," he said, bringing out his fishing rods and lines.

The place they sought was a deserted saw-mill that stood on the north bank of the river, just under the east brow of a rocky point that projected into the Hudson, where the waters rushed through an abandoned and rotting flume, rejoining the main stream midway of the S-shaped bend, in a deep pool. Towards the shore-side, where a back-water eddy was created by the flow, was a deep basin that had once been used as a booming-place for logs, and just at the inner edge of the white-flecked, roaring junction of flume and river Enoch had "reckoned to fin' dem fish."

The north bank of the river rose steeply to the height of perhaps a hundred feet. In the early lumbering days this declivity from the table-land above was used as a rollway, from which temporary skidding-ground the logs were plunged into the waters below and held in check by the boom until they could be sawed into lumber in the mill.

When Martin and Enoch arrived there all was silent on the hill-side, except for the twitter of birds in the dense undergrowth of bushes or in the woods at either side of the worn-out rollway. The dark green of the spruce and hemlocks was toned by the softer shadings of the young maples in their summer verdure. Blue-jays shrilled their signal of warning as a rabbit vaulted to cover. At the sky-line, across the river, on the blackened stubs of pines, a convention of crows, with a hundred delegates; was in session, rising on wing to caw applause when the presiding genius, on the topmost branch, gave solemn voice to some wise utterance regarding the duty of mankind to crows.

The scene aroused in Martin a keen sense of joy, dispelling all annoyance, as he clambered down the hill and stopped on the plateau, awaiting Enoch's instructions. When rods and lines were ready, Enoch started to guide Martin down the bank to the edge of the pool.

"Look out! Look out, Marse Martin!" Enoch exclaimed, as the lad sprang upon a log at the edge of the lower rollway. "Ef you ain't car'ful yo' get yo' back broke. Dat ole log's on de aige, jes' holdin' dar by 'ims teef."

"Oh, that's been there for years," Martin said, with boyish contempt for danger. "You couldn't stir it with a pike-pole."

He hit the log a blow with his heel. It started, turned half-way over, and settled at the verge of the bluff against a small overhanging root.

"I guess you're right, Enoch," he said, jumping back. Then, with eagerness: "Let's roll it down and see it splash!"

"No, no! You scar dem fish, sure. Come on, Marse Martin. Don't cotch yo' toes in dem bresh," he cautioned, as he helped the boy safely down to the narrow strip of sandy bank directly under the rollway. Martin cast a glance upward. The old log was still in its place.

The river-bed deepened abruptly at this point. A foot or two of sandy beach; a green slippery shelf, and then a sudden plunge down to the basin.

"Let me catch the bait," Martin said, impatiently, as Enoch waded into the shallows and turned the loose stones.

"No, Marse Martin, you stay whar you is. Dis ain't no place fo' you. Dar's one! I cotched 'im!" Enoch cried, seizing a crawfish.

"Oh, come," Martin said, petulantly, "you've got enough to start. Let me have that one."

"In jes' a minute. Let me cotch dis one."

Enoch stooped again, his back towards the bank.

Suddenly there came to his alert senses an ominous, crunching noise. He straightened up and looked over his shoulder.

The log was rolling down upon them.

In that flashing glance he realized the peril to Martin, sitting unconscious of danger.

At the same moment, Martin noticed Enoch's look, and turned his face upwards. He saw the log coming down the bank. He tried to rise. His feet slipped on the slimy stones.

"Enoch!" he screamed, and reeled dizzily.

Enoch wheeled and caught him as he lunged, lifted him, poised him at arms'-height, and flung him backward, out into the deep water of the pool.

The log came grinding, crashing on. It dashed upon the rock where Martin had been sitting, careened, swerved from its course, and bounded out, striking Enoch, with spent force, hurling him sideways to the ledge, and dipped end downward into the stream.

A few strong strokes, and Martin clambered on the ledge, where Enoch lay half stunned.

"Enoch! Dear old Enoch!" he cried, dragging the negro to the sandy beach

The man sat up, dazed and weak, while Martin hugged him in the stress of his emotion.

"I thought you were dead! You saved my life!"

"Pshaw, honey chile! I' libbin', thank Gawd!" he said, as he limped about and tried his arms and legs. "Takes a heap to kill dis ole man. Ain't quite suah I's all heah yit. I reckon we bettah be totin' dat fishpole home. Mighty sorry de fishin's spoiled fo' you, chile!"

The more Martin thought of this incident at the old mill, the clearer it appeared to his mind that Enoch had, indeed, saved him from peril at the hazard of his own life. But Enoch's natural reticence, and Martin's reluctance to speak of what seemed to him to be a stupid adventure, had kept them both from making the matter public. It was not until a week or two had passed that he chanced to allude to the scene in Mary's presence.

"What!" she exclaimed, her face growing pale, "the log actually hit the rock you were sitting on? Why, Enoch really saved your life!"

"Yes," he admitted, "I believe I do owe him about all my life is worth. But don't get frightened at past dangers, Mary," he added, laughingly. "You look as pale as a ghost"

"It might have been a very serious accident, Martin," she said; and from that day, for some reason she did not explain, she showed a more kindly interest in Enoch than she had ever manifested before. Naturally, she repeated the story to Mrs. Wright; and so, in the course of time, it reached the ears of the judge. He, however, dismissed the subject, with a simple caution to Martin against taking too great risks in his sports.

But between Martin and Enoch, as if suggested by Mary's quiet regard, there grew a stronger bond of friendship; and before many weeks had elapsed, Martin was pleased to notice that Judge Northcote had shown a tacit appreciation of Enoch's conduct and bravery by bringing him up-stairs, as his own body-servant.

The judge's movements were always deliberate; and, moreover, Martin knew that his benefactor deprecated any allusion to an action which, like this of the advancement of Enoch, was suggestive of sentiment or emotion. He, therefore, made no comment on the change, in the judge's hearing, and restricted his pleasure to a handshake with Enoch in the privacy of the corridor outside the judge's door.

It was not a difficult matter for the judge to accept Enoch in this new capacity. Accustomed in early life to the services of negro servants, and having an inherited liking for the race in this way, he enjoyed having the man about him. It was plain that Enoch had never been a field-hand; but if the judge at first entertained a suspicion of the truth regarding his former condition, the lapse of time effected the same change in the master's mind as in Martin's.

Mr. Northcote's manner towards Enoch, when the new servant showed his fitness for the place, effectually silenced all questions below stairs. In his livery of blue coat with brass buttons and white waistcoat, Enoch became an ideal attendant on the judge.

It may have been that Enoch's love and admiration for Martin, which he was constantly showing in the judge's presence; or it may have been that Mr. Northcote's closer observation of Martin's evident progress and intrinsic worth, at this period, when he had just turned eighteen, wrought another change for his advancement. Whatever the immediate cause, it is true that now occurred an event which not only benefited him, but delighted Mrs. Wright.

The judge entered the dining-room one day with more than his accustomed suavity. The atmosphere of the place was permeated with his graciousness. Every piece of the Sheraton mahogany—that rare old mahogany which the Fairfields had brought from England in the long ago—contributed to the grace of the judge's manner and lent the polish of its surface to reflect the genial humor of his mood.

"Margaret," he said, over his coffee, "I am of the opinion that Martin is now old enough to enjoy a somewhat broader social advantage. For my own sake, he should give proper heed to his manners as he becomes more intimately associated with me. A seat at our table would be beneficial to him."

"I shall like that, I am sure," Mrs. Wright answered, a new light in her eyes. "And, if you do not object, I think we might make him more comfortable by fitting up a room for him on our floor. His room down-stairs is very small, and the south guest-chambers are seldom used."

"The arrangements of the household, Margaret, are in your hands," the judge replied.

Mrs. Wright smiled her thanks.

"I have also decided," the judge continued, "to confer a small salary on him, contrary to custom, that he may begin to feel a greater degree of personal independence. I shall encourage him to talk at table, and during the long winter evenings, I shall invite him to spend an hour or two with me in the library. He seems to be deficient in ease of manner."

"I know, brother, how the dear boy suffers from bashfulness. What you are doing now is the greatest kindness you have shown him since you brought him here."

But, long after this change was made, and Martin became one of the family group, the practice of these lessons in deportment was most difficult. His first attempts at self-forgetfulness were sorry failures. For though he craved society, and was welcomed by the young people of the village, he was conscious that he blushed so easily and hated himself so intensely for it, that he usually declined invitations to their little parties; and, with the exception of Mrs. Wright, there was only one of the opposite sex with whom he felt at ease. Mary Whittaker always seemed to understand him. He forgot his awkwardness in her presence. and was natural and unembarrassed.

The improvement in Martin's prospects were quickly made known in so small a place. The townspeople soon began to discuss the evident alteration in Judge Northcote's bearing towards the favored boy. The gentle gossips, any one of whom would have been delighted to see some sign of interest in herself, and sighing at the judge's unaccountable indifference to society, tried to forecast a probable advancement in Martin's worldly affairs. For if these rumors proved true, Martin was destined, in public opinion, to be even more fortunate than Sidney Graham, who was now no longer in Sandy Hill, but was attending college at old Union. The judge had taken Mr. Coulter somewhat into his confidence about this matter, and Mrs. Coulter grew confidential in those quiet little talks with Mrs. Wright, which her position permitted her to enjoy at the great house. From the subject of feminine fashions—from the question of poke-bonnets, neck-ruffs, and plumes, Mrs. Coulter gradually led up to the demands of the village society on one of these occasions.

"My dear Mrs. Wright," she pleaded, "I really wish you could induce Mr. Martin to accept my invitation to the rectory to-morrow evening. We shall have a few of the young people there, to meet my niece, Helen Stafford. You remember I told you she was coming to make us a visit. She is the only child of my brother in Albany. I know you will like and admire the sweet girl."

"I am sure I will, and I shall do all I can to influence Martin. He is too much alone for his own good."

But Martin had made up his mind, on receiving this invitation, that he would not go, and Mrs. Wright called Mary to her assistance in arguing the cause.

"You know, Martin," Mary urged, "how few boys there are in the village, and how much they count on you."

"But I hate society," he pleaded.

"Do you hate me?" she asked, smilingly. "I shall be there."

"Oh, that's different; you are not society—you are just the nicest girl in the world. You're not a bit like those giggling girls who always seem to be laughing at my blunders."

She looked into his face without smiling. "Then go to oblige me," she said.

He was walking up and down the room, with his hands thrust into his pockets, frowning over the prospect of having to meet a stranger. Mary was sitting where the sunlight fell full on her, tinting her soft brown hair with a golden hue. Her large hazel eyes, lifted frankly to his, seemed for the moment to catch the color of the deep blue of the summer sky. Martin had never thought of her appearance before, but now she held him as by a spell—not by her beauty, but by the purity of her soul. He was not, however, indifferent to the charm of her presence, as she sat there in her neat dress of brown, with its puffed sleeves, tight below the shapely elbow; the snowy ruff around her neck; the flaring skirt, with its deep border of flouncing, and her big plumed hat.

"I'll do anything to please you, Mary," he said, impulsively.

"That's a promise. I shall expect you to call for me!" she exclaimed, and left him before he could retract or explain his words.

He saw that Mrs. Wright was evidently so pleased to find that he had decided to go, that he felt obliged to keep faith with Mary. He was on hand at the appointed time, but she was detained by her father, who had just returned from a long ride, tired and hungry. Martin could feel his courage ooze away as he sat waiting for her to get the doctor's supper; and when at last they entered the rectory, he was in a state of nervous dread.

Mary apologized for their late coming, but Mrs. Coulter said to her, "I am glad you are come, dear child, even if you are late."

The girls were already on pleasant terms. Helen greeted Mary with effusion. "I am so glad. I was beginning to think you weren't coming," she said, and looked past her as Mrs. Coulter brought Martin through the chattering crowd.

"Helen," she said, "this is Martin Brook. Martin, my niece, Miss Helen Stafford."

He bowed stiffly, his cheeks aflame, his hand held awkwardly forward.

"I've heard of you, Mr. Brook," Helen said, smilingly, taking his hand lightly. "Aunty has told me about beautiful Elmhurst. Judge Northcote is so distinguished. You intend to study the law?"

A thrill ran through Martin at the touch of her hand. He looked gravely at the girl. The flattering note in her cooing voice awakened a new idea. His tongue was dry, but he felt that he must say something.

"No, not the law. I am learning to be a printer," he said.

"A printer?" There was a slight lifting of the dark brows.

"Yes," said Martin, annoyed at what seemed a need to defend his trade.

Helen turned to greet another guest. Martin was given a moment in which to study her. He was conscious of the indefinable charm of her perfect self-possession. He noted the full round lines of her face and the contour of her throat; the dark skin tinged with the first flush of health in youth; the laughing mouth that arched and drew down in a curve at the corners; the short, even, creamlike teeth; the small, transparent ears, slightly pointed at the top and set close to the head, half hidden in a mass of waving blue-black hair. His heart beat quickly. He was sure he had never seen so charming a girl. Her filmy gown of inexpressible colorings, her soft arms seen through the gauze, her dainty slippers crossed with white ribbons, seemed like a vision.

For the first time in his life, Martin stood breathing the atmosphere of love.

The delicate sting of her inquiry was gone when she once more turned her dark, liquid eyes on him and smiled. He did not comprehend that she was merely measuring the value of another conquest, but by some strange evidence of the mind, which was beyond his power of reasoning, he resented it. She seemed a woman in wisdom; she made him feel his youthfulness, beyond the real difference in their years.

"And you like the work?" she said, as though no interruption had broken in on their conversation. She was looking him over; his undisguised admiration flattered and amused her. She lifted her perfumed fan and toyed with it.

"Yes," Martin resumed, earnestly, as Mary passed on, "the work is to my liking, and, as you remarked, the judge is a distinguished man. We all hold him in the highest respect." He was amazed at his own fluency and self-reliance. The spirit of the girl, so peculiarly exhilarating, encouraged him to proceed. He forgot his awkwardness, and stepped nearer to her, but became aware that she was looking beyond him. She moved aside to greet a new arrival. He turned around. Sidney Graham was approaching.

"Why, Mr. Graham!" Helen exclaimed, cordially, holding out her hand beyond Martin, who withdrew a step as Sidney passed him with a careless nod. "I thought you were at college, digging away among the Greek ruins." Graham bent low, and carried her finger-tips to his lips, holding her hand for a moment.

"I prefer to study Helen's beauties in the original," he said.

One of the village girls spoke to Martin, but he scarcely noticed her. He heard Helen say reprovingly to Graham:

"We haven't met since the New Year's ball at Albany. That does not quite agree with your assertion of interest in me."

"But as soon as I learned from my mother that you were here," Graham replied, "I came up solely to see you."

"That is not complimentary to your mother," Helen said, with a smile.

"Can you blame me for thinking first of you?" he asked. "Come and sing for me." He led her from the group, her hand resting daintily on his high-held palm, and seated her at the harpsichord, bending over her as he turned the music while she sang.

Martin crossed the room to where Mary was seated.

"Come, Mary. Let's go home," he said.

"Why, Martin," she said, in a low voice, "we can't go yet. You must wait until you say good-night. Besides, the refreshments are being served."

As she spoke, Mrs. Coulter came to them. "Now, Mary, and Martin, there are places at the table for you. Come right out." She led them into the dining-room; and while they were seated there, Mary tried in vain to draw him into conversation.

"Why do you want to go home so soon?" she asked. "Aren't you enjoying yourself?"

"No," he said.

She studied his face, puzzled to understand his mood. Could it be that this unlooked-for meeting with Sidney Graham had caused the sudden alteration in manner; or—was it the stranger who had disturbed him? He had seemed very much interested in her only a moment before, and now he was anxious to go.

In spite of Mary's quiet pleas, they were the first to say good-night. She made no further effort to detain him.

"We hope to see you soon, Mr. Brook," Mrs. Coulter said, warmly. "I am so glad you were able to come to-night. You mustn't let your studies occupy all your time."

"I shall be most happy to call," he said, earnestly, lingering a moment over Helen's hand. "I hope you will like Sandy Hill."

"I am charmed with its people, at all events," she said, slipping her arm about Mary's waist. "Good-night, dear."

Martin followed Mary out into the hall, but when she went up-stairs for her bonnet, he edged his way back to Helen.

"I hope you will stay long enough to see some of our notable places. Have you ever seen the Jane McCrea tree?" he asked.

"No," she replied, "but I should like to."

"They are going to hold the Fourth of July picnic at that spot," Martin said, "and I hope that Mrs. Coulter will be willing to go."

Mary came down the stairs with her bonnet on. He could only add another hurried good-night, and catch Helen's words:

"I'm sure it would be delightful to have her take me."

He walked by Mary's side the short distance between the houses, without speaking.

"What *is* the matter with you, Martin?" Mary asked.

"Why, nothing, Mary," he replied.

"What do you think of Miss Stafford?" she said.

"I think she's a very nice girl," he returned, with assumed indifference. "What do you think of her?"

"She had a very pretty dress, and she does her hair becomingly."

He looked down into her face questioningly.

"I thought her eyes were her chief charm," he said.

They were silent for a moment.

"I can't see what Miss Stafford can find to admire in that fellow Graham," he exclaimed, testily.

"I understand that Miss Stafford's father is a diplomat," she remarked.

"What has that to do with Graham?" he asked.

"Perhaps nothing. Good-night," she said, opening the door.

"Good-night, Mary," he said, and walked briskly home.

She stopped on the porch to watch him as he went along the path and out into the street. "Yes, it was the girl," she said, and entered the house.

When at breakfast Mrs. Wright announced that Mrs. Coulter and Miss Stafford would take tea with her three days hence, Martin remarked, as he crumbled his roll: "I was very much pleased with Miss Stafford."

Mrs. Wright smiled.

"I'm glad to see you take interest in people, Martin," she said. "You really ought to go out more frequently. So you liked Miss Stafford?"

"Yes. She is a very pleasant young lady."

The judge caught the name. "Miss Stafford?" he said. "Why, I have just received a letter from my old friend Colonel Stafford. He expressed the hope that you would find opportunity to meet his daughter, Margaret. He says she is at the rectory visiting his sister, Mrs. Coulter."

"We have already met her," Mrs. Wright remarked, looking at Martin.

"Oh, have you?" the judge said, turning towards Martin. He saw that the young man's face was crimson.

"Yes," said Mrs. Wright, "Martin attended a little party last night, and I was there in the morning and invited them to tea with me next Friday. You will be one of us?"

"If you desire it," the judge assented.

"I certainly do; and, Martin, we will have Mary and some of the young people, if you like."

"I think small companies are pleasanter, don't you?" he asked.

"Very well. Then we will ask only Mary." And the subject was dropped; but Martin began, on his own account, to lay plans for Miss Stafford's entertainment. That afternoon he called at the rectory to pay his respects and broach the subject of the Fourth to Mrs. Coulter.

He learned that Helen was gone—summoned home by a messenger from her mother, who was ill. But Mrs. Coulter, profuse in her regrets, did not learn from Martin's lips how keenly he felt the disappointment. He said nothing, not even to Mary, and became more studious and exclusive than ever; although he carried Helen's image in his mind, suffering tortures at the thought of his stupidity in her presence, and the bright things he might have said if his plans could have been carried out. His dislike for Graham meanwhile grew more intense, as he recalled the ease with which the fellow had eclipsed him at the party, and yet he could not bring himself to an open avowal of his feelings.

Before he had summoned courage to speak there were more important matters than a boy's first love to engage the attention of the judge. Looking across the newspaper he was reading, he said to Martin:

"Well, here is something I can approve of at last. President Adams has made an admirable choice in the matter of that special commissioner to England. I know Mr. Stafford will be judicious and incorruptible. Yes, you met his daughter — Mrs. Coulter's niece. Stafford is a born diplomat. His duties in this complication will, no doubt, keep him abroad a long time. I am sure that the experience will be of benefit to his family and a pleasure to himself, however his work may result for the people."

"Abroad? Mr. Stafford? They—will—he will be absent some time?" Martin stammered.

"Necessarily," the judge replied. "They sail at once, the paper says."

Chapter VIII

THE monotony of life at Sandy Hill was not interrupted for several months, except when Martin was taken out of the printing-office and given a desk in the sanctum, there to become more intimately associated with the judge and the men who made the sanctum their debating ground. Helen Stafford's personality gradually faded from his mind, until at last she was but an idealized memory.

There was, however, one very decided break in the routine of Martin's own personal affairs when, on his nineteenth birthday, the judge said to him: "You are doing well, my boy, in your work, but I wish you to have a clearer impression of the law. Such information will be of great service to you as a political writer. Possibly, some day, you may be called on to assume other duties than these in my little office. We are living in agitated times. Cool-headed thinkers are always in request. I advise that you study the law, under my direction. It will make up partly for your lack of a collegiate course. I prefer to have your affairs so arranged that, in any event, you will feel properly equipped for action."

"Your wishes are always my law," Martin replied.

The judge undertook at once to train Martin in the theory and the practice of the law. He devised debates and discussions, and drilled his pupil in ponderous oratory. They read the speeches of Clay and Calhoun aloud, taking part in opposition, with original digressions. It was a contest of wits, in which the judge was sometimes compelled to admit defeat; for Martin proved himself an adept at "thinking on his feet."

The work was proceeding satisfactorily when Sidney Graham returned from college. Rumor followed him regarding certain escapades resulting in his suspension; but Judge Northcote, to whom gossip was an offence, saw in the young man a kind of shrewdness that entertained him; and because of this toleration Graham was frequently at the *Sentinel* office.

Simultaneously there occurred an event in the outside world which profoundly affected partisans of all sections. DeWitt Clinton died. It was no secret that Judge Northcote had opposed the Governor in several of his political measures, because the spirit of commercialism, fostered by Clinton's policies, was distasteful to him. Besides, the judge was ever loyal to his friends, and chief among these stood Mr. Tompkins. Although those antagonisms were now buried in the grave, the judge's reputation for consistency created discussion as to his probable comments on the services of the great Improver. The country was ringing with praises of Clinton, and still the judge remained silent.

One morning Mr. Northcote found an anonymous letter thrust under his office door. It contained a eulogy of Clinton, fair in tone, but strongly approbative of his works. It was written in a hand of peculiar style. The eloquence of the tribute and the beauty of the diction appealed to the scholarly man; but the secrecy of its authorship piqued him. The implied aspersion on his own sense of justice to the dead annoyed him. Besides, it was well known that the customs of journalism demanded that the name of the writer should be imparted to the editor; and the longer he puzzled over the matter the more he was determined to find out who, in Sandy Hill, was capable of doing such excellent literary work.

When the office was filled with his friends, he brought the paper out and said he had something he wished them to listen to. He read it aloud, scanning each face for some trace of self-consciousness, but none was shown; and although the judge asserted that he could not publish the article unless the writer's name was revealed to him, his friends declared he must not consign it, on that account, to the waste-basket.

The next issue of the *Sentinel*, therefore, contained this article, which not only generously reviewed the record of the dead statesman, but, by its breadth of prophecy, awakened interest in the mysterious writer.

Again, a week later, a second letter appeared, crowding its way under the office door, still without evidence of its origin. But the theme now treated was the partisan issue of the tariff, and by this time the village was thoroughly aroused. Public sentiment held that the man who could write such essays ought surely to place himself in position to receive the commendation of his fellow-citizens. Yet no one claimed the honor. While the judge and his friends were still discussing the disputed question of authorship, Sidney Graham joined the company in the office, and sat smiling wisely, implying he could if he would. Martin was also present.

"I had no idea that the letters would create so much comment," Graham observed, placidly.

Judge Northcote turned to him in surprise, with the point-blank question: "Did you write those letters?"

"Why, judge, really I do not wish to become bored with praise, you know; but I cannot decline that which is thrust upon me," he said, with assumed modesty. "Yes, I wrote the articles."

"Mr. Graham," Martin said, looking up from his desk by the window, in amazement, "if you are the author of those letters it is easy to prove the identity. The handwriting is remarkably peculiar. Will you oblige me by writing a few lines of this?" He spread the last copy of the *Sentinel* before him, pointing to the anonymous article.

"I don't regard myself under any obligations to comply with such a request from you," Graham said, coolly.

"Come, come, Graham," the judge remarked. "You must either comply with Martin's request, or stand convicted of a fear to do so."

'I consider the source, judge," Graham replied, with assumed indifference "If you had questioned my veracity—"

"Perhaps I do," the judge said, dryly.

Graham flushed, but checked a retort, for the judge was not heeding him. He saw that Northcote was studying Martin, a look of curiosity in his eyes.

"I infer from this, Mr. Brook," said Graham, haughtily, "that you are audacious enough to dispute my word. Do you assert that you are the writer of those letters?"

"I make no assertion," said Martin, calmly. "I merely offer you the opportunity to prove your implied claim."

"Implied claim!" said Graham. "I could prove my statement if I cared to."

"I have not sought this unpleasant scene," Martin replied; "but since you force me to expose you, I will do so."

Graham rose as if to leave the room. Martin stopped him.

"Pardon me," he insisted. "This matter has gone too far to be left unsettled. I will copy this opening paragraph and lay it before these gentlemen, along with the first sheet of the original manuscript, and leave the case with them." He sat down at his desk and wrote the page, without referring to the original. He traced the letters in their odd form, omitting no shading or point of punctuation. Every man in the room watched him with silent eagerness. He scattered sand over the wet lines, gently shook the loose grains from the paper, and handed the sheet to the judge.

"A perfect copy," the judge assented, warmly, as he passed the paper to Mr. Coulter.

Northcote paused a moment. Then: "Martin, are you the author of those letters?"

"I am, sir," Martin replied.

"Gentlemen," said the judge, rising in enthusiasm, "congratulate me on having so able an assistant."

The men gathered about Martin, shaking his hand and praising him, while he sought to avoid such a demonstration.

"Humph!" ejaculated Graham as he walked towards the door. "I presume you mean an assistant copyist, judge. It is well to conceal one's inconsistency of opinion. How much of that fulsome eulogy of your late antagonist did *you* write?"

Northcote turned upon him like a judge passing sentence.

"You have assumed an honor which does not belong to you," he said; "the authorship of a work which I believe you incapable of performing. You have uttered a deliberate lie. You have forfeited the right to associate with gentlemen. Your remark reflects upon me, as well as on this young man. I scorn a direct reply. You will, hereafter, sir, show the truest appreciation of your own conduct by remaining out of my office."

"Indeed," said Graham, adjusting his scarf. "You seem to imagine that you are a gentleman."

Martin wheeled upon him, every fibre tense. The judge laid a hand on Martin's arm.

Graham slowly and insolently sauntered out of the room.

The publication of these articles in the *Sentinel* established Martin in the small world of Sandy Hill. There were sceptics, of course, who, prompted by Sidney Graham, professed a belief that Judge Northcote was the author, and had used Martin as a cloak to eulogistic words of Clinton which he did not care to admit; but the judge knew the truth. He cast aside his wonted reserve and told Mrs. Wright of his affectionate regard for Martin. The boy, he said, was worthy to become his heir.

This avowal was received by her with a mother's joy at the success of a son; but, at the judge's order, the decision was not alluded to again by her.

For fully three years the people of Sandy Hill were left to their own conjectures, although the judge no longer attempted to conceal his pride in Martin. But, with this exception, there was no material change in the life at Elmhurst. It became more apparent that there was harmony of tastes between the judge and his *protégé;* and that, although inherently different in nature, they were alike in their selection of studies. Neither was mathematical; each was philosophical. Their choice of reading was the same—history, ethics, theology, political science — and the judge continued to foster a love of classical literature in Martin by inviting him to read aloud in the library. The dormant geniality in Northcote's mind expanded under the protracted task of reviving, during the passing years, his own knowledge of Latin and Greek in his instruction of Martin, who was quick of perception, retentive and sincere; and the young man's increasing mastery over self-consciousness, joined with his emotional earnestness, gave promise of his developing into a convincing public speaker.

Notwithstanding a love of theological discussion, Judge Northcote was not what was termed a "pious" man, and was regarded askance by the orthodox churches, outside of his own small circle, wherein Mr. Coulter was the shining light. For, although he was not a communicant of the Episcopal Church, he practically supported that denomination, as a family tradition. He spoke of all religious organizations as "a moral-police necessity," and on the question of the Trinity he was wholly at sea.

In accordance with his sense of social obligation, the judge contributed generously and impartially to each religious society in the village, yet avoided those complications which might compel him to invite any minister to his home. Towards the Methodists, however, he held an especial prejudice of dislike, although he disarmed censure by avowing this feeling to be purely a prejudice—and by sending a larger sum in support of the society than could be reasonably expected, as a "peace offering to a despised people."

Every time a Methodist preacher came to Sandy Hill he felt it to be his duty to convert the judge. These efforts ended always in the same manner—a polite refusal to treat the visitor, at the office, as a clergyman, a strict avoidance of social intercourse, and a mysterious increase in the preacher's small salary, "from a distant friend."

Martin necessarily came directly under the influence of this seductive form of reasoning. His gratitude towards Judge Northcote; his admiration for the man's mental equipment; and his desire to show these sentiments by the highest obedience, proscribed serious antagonism to his preceptor's teachings. His conception of spiritual things remained in embryo. If Judge Northcote could see no logical reason for accepting the Methodistic theory of a personal God, Martin could invent no system of logic to prove his tutor in error. God and heaven and mother were still to him the same as when he prayed to that silent figure under the white sheet.

There was also a subtle ministration to Martin's vanity in the compliment of being taken by the judge into the readings of Plato, Voltaire and Paine on terms of equality; into the comparative study of Homer, Dante, and Milton; into discussions of the growth of the religious idea, and the values of literature. "Pantheism" held a pleasing sound. Above all else, the sense of intellectual growth appealed delightfully to the youthful mind.

And the judge revelled in this experimentation with a soul. He had discovered the "stuff" of the parent stock in Martin, who did not lack strength of mind or will. There was the making of a man in him—a man fit for the coming struggle in the nation, which the judge was constantly forecasting — the coming time when strong forces would be needed to check the flood of turbulent democracy. The rapid settlement of the East, under the first impulse of "improvement" and immigration, alarmed the judge. He sought to use a new force, seen in this young man, but which was not remaining in his own grasp. He would make this boy a barrier against Radicalism. Religion he cared little for; it was but an incident—an effect of locality. The greater work for Martin, as his instructor saw it, lay in the realm of the law-makers, when restraining statutes should be required to check the tide of ignorance.

But despite these plans and studies at Elmhurst, the Methodist Episcopal Church was then experiencing a phenomenal expansion throughout the country. There was no sign of decaying vitality in the institution. Men were not questioning the textual inspiration of the Bible, or the wisdom of the Methodist creed. The spirit of emotionalism was everywhere increasing.

The region of the upper Hudson was not keeping pace with the growth of Methodism. There was a condition of worldliness in the northern counties that was deplored by the Church. The bishop, whose heart was alive to the needs of his old circuit, which included Sandy Hill, decided on an itinerant preacher named Elisha Morris as the right person for the place. He was a man of powerful frame, uncouth of manner, dogmatic, illiterate, but full of evangelical zeal, and incapable of fatigue. He had ridden the northern circuit in the days that tried the stamina of man and horse.

Mr. Morris knew Judge Northcote, and looked upon him as a most dangerous enemy to the kingdom of Christ and Christ's chosen instrument on earth—the Methodist Church. Morris had refused, time and time again, to accept donations from the hands of this Baal, but had relaxed none of his vigor in the work of converting the influential though deluded man.

The Rev. Elisha Morris came down upon the timid and scattered fold of Sandy Hill like a pentecostal flame. He drove the weak sheep to cover and picked out the bravest ones as leaders. He put the bells on these and let down the bars for a revival; and although it was not customary to hold protracted meetings just as spring work was coming on, Brother Morris roared his orders in the ears of his people, and the church doors flew open.

Night after night the labor of salvation went forward. The little town was convulsed with religious zeal. Farmers drove in from the surrounding country. Their teams were hitched in every available spot. The shade trees along the streets, used as posts, were gnawed to ruin by impatient animals—a desecration which Judge Northcote resented as a form of sinfulness greater even than a lack of faith.

All of the denominations in the village, excepting the Episcopalians, joined in the meetings. Mr. Coulter held aloof, but Brother Morris, undisturbed by ritualistic opinions, welcomed all. If any believed in immersion, he was ready to plunge them in the redeeming waters of the Hudson; if in sprinkling, he stood to cleanse them with the purifying spray. He was there, above all other considerations, regardless of forms, to awaken the spirit of the Lord.

Sandy Hill had stood long enough on the verge of hell.

Of course it was impossible for Martin to remain entirely indifferent to this great movement. The excitement was in the air. Mr. Morris had not called on Judge Northcote at his office, but that omission of courtesy did not affect the judge's peace of mind. He had been solicited by the Methodist official board to contribute to the expense fund, and had done so with bland generosity, simply suggesting that the trees be saved as well as the souls.

The judge was relating this incident one evening at the table, while the revival was at its height, when Martin, laughing at the witticism, said:

"I believe I will go down to hear Mr. Morris, if you have no objection. They say he is a remarkably effective speaker."

"By all means go," the judge replied, a slight smile twitching the corners of his mouth. "It is your duty to study every phase of life, and this is certainly an interesting one."

"It seems so to me, sir. I was wondering what this man can say to so move the people. We may learn a new trick in oratory from him." He laughed lightly.

"Oh, Martin," Mrs. Wright said, gently. "You ought not to laugh at religion."

"I'm not irreverent," he replied.

"Well," said the judge, with profound gravity, "pray don't learn a new trick in grammar, my boy."

"Why, brother!" Mrs. Wright said, truly disturbed. "I am afraid that we are all being demoralized. I have talked the matter over with Mr. Coulter, and he has reached the conclusion that the Church is certainly being brought into disrepute."

"I fancy he means the people, not the Church," the judge replied.

"Martin," she urged, "please don't remain if you find the air of the place foul. I am told that the ventilation is wholly neglected."

"Don't worry, little mother," Martin said, bending and kissing her forehead. "You are too watchful of me. Even the air I breathe is watched over by you."

As he left the room, Mrs. Wright, flushed with pleasure, said: "I hope Martin will not be influenced by this man."

"Influenced?" the judge repeated, contemptuously. "I trust you have a higher opinion of him, and of me, than to entertain such a thought seriously."

Chapter IX

THE little church was stifling, as Martin passed into it from the clear, crisp air. There was not a vacant seat near the door or the small windows. He stood, hat in hand, looking about him, studying the people. From his vantage-point at the lower end of the centre aisle he caught a ludicrous view of the backs of heads and the contortions of the audience as it twisted in solemn curiosity at the sound of late-comers. He drew a mental picture of the scene, with which to amuse the judge. The building was plain enough, surely, to conform to his opinion of Methodism. A desolate place, with a level floor and straight-backed, uncushioned pews; the bare white walls and ceilings unrelieved by a single decoration. Between the windows, on tin brackets with fluted reflectors, were tallow candles, that flared and sputtered in winding-sheets, dripping grease. The one door opened from a small vestibule, that protruded like a sentry's box on the front of the building. At the opposite end of the church from Martin was a semi-circular platform, about a foot high, enclosed by an altar-rail. A kneeling-place projected beyond this railing. A higher platform, reached by two steps on either side, stood on the lower one against the rear wall, extending forward some few feet. At the front of this stood the square box of a pulpit, with a Bible and hymn-book. An oil lamp on the desk sent its feeble ray and strong stench full into the faces of the audience. There was a haircloth-covered settle behind the desk and a plain table just beneath the pulpit behind the rail. Martin had attended services here before, but now he found the atmosphere so different, morally and physically, that he felt out of place. All sense of reverence was lacking in him. He was critical and displeased.

The meeting was not yet begun, but his curiosity was already satisfied. There was no reason why he should stay long in such an uncongenial company. He acknowledged to himself that Mrs. Wright was, as usual, correct. He decided to go home. He faced about and started out. Brother Morris barred his way.

"Ah, my dear young man!" the preacher exclaimed in a loud voice. "I'm glad to see you here. Praise God!"

Every head was craned in his direction—every eye was fixed on the pair — the towering frame of the preacher, the smaller but no less noticeable figure of Martin. The contrast in dress, in manner, in spirit, was striking. The preacher was carelessly, even untidily dressed. His flaring coat was spotted with the drippings of many dinners. Martin was in the fashion of the day, trim and well put together—his spike-tailed blue coat and light trousers, his polished boots, his high hat, all brushed and spotless.

The preacher flung an arm over Martin's shoulder and pushed him along the aisle, with annoying insistency.

"Pardon me, sir," Martin protested, trying to disengage himself. "There is no seat here. I will come again—"

"Plenty of room — plenty of room!" the preacher cried. "Here, brother," pulling a man out of a pew near the front, "go on the pulpit steps. Make way for this young soul seeking repentance. Glory to God, there is always room in a Methodist church!"

He pressed Martin into the vacated seat. The man he had displaced crept forward and sank down on the platform steps, stroking his mouth and smiling in embarrassed self-consciousness.

Martin, crimson with mortification and anger, dropped into the seat. The preacher ascended the platform.

A moment later the congregation stragglingly arose, as Brother Morris roared forth the opening lines of the hymn, "Turn to the Lord and seek salvation."

A hundred pairs of eyes were fastened on Martin when he stood up. He was outraged at the familiarity of this man who had forced him into such prominence. He wavered between a sense of courtesy and a feeling of wounded pride. He hated to be conspicuous —yet he felt it impossible to retreat.

The preacher's opening prayer and the second hymn were unheeded by him. He decided to leave the church, let the scandal be what it might, although he realized that such action, by one of his well-known views, at this moment of popular feeling, was a serious thing.

But when Mr. Morris stepped to the side of the platform, without opening the Bible, and began his exhortation, Martin changed his mind.

The man's odd personality compelled attention. Martin ceased to be conscious of resentment. At first the speaker's words carried no meaning. But suddenly a message came for him — a challenge of his opinions.

"There is a personal God," he heard the preacher say, with the positiveness of knowledge. "A personal God, to whom we must go for salvation. In our vanity we say there is no God. It is the fool that sayeth this, and the fool perisheth. But God leads us by ways we do not comprehend. He gives us life. He gives us freedom. He leads us on into the right path. He saves our lives from destruction, that we may glorify Him. Christ, His Son, is our mediator and our strength. A personal God—a God of mercy to the penitent—a God of justice and wrath to the impenitent sinner."

A tremor of hostility ran through Martin. He began mentally to frame a reply; but his thoughts were disordered in the torrent of commandment from the pulpit.

"A personal God?" That was impossible—absurd. It was contrary to reason—to the teachings of— The teachings of whom?

Confused by the emotion that now began to assert itself among those about him, astounded by the assertiveness of the preacher, whose word was law in this sanctuary, Martin could not preserve a continuity of ideas. His own emotional nature, so long repressed in the calm and confidence of the library, was touched to life.

The sermon was ended. The converts were trooping past him to the altar, and kneeling in loud prayer.

There were cries and groans and invocations. Hysterical women fell to the floor and wrung their hands. The congregation became a mass of swaying people. Arms were held high in air, and sins unthought-of were openly confessed.

Men crawled about the platform on their knees, stroking the heads of the weeping converts. One young woman, overwhelmed by the excitement, lay prone upon the floor, rolling over and over in an agony of distress.

From the older members in the pews, kneeling on the floor with heads buried in their hands, issued the deep bass of "Thank God!" and the shrill treble of the women's "Blessed Lord!" It was a babel of sound, an abandonment of self-control.

Among these mourners Brother Morris moved, uttering imploring words to some, commanding words to others.

Martin felt the preacher's eyes burning into him. But Morris read the young mind before him—he refrained from urging Martin to "come forward."

A man Martin knew, and for whom he had but slight respect, was less prudent in his course. He came up to him, and, laying a hand on his shoulder, complacently urged: "My dear young friend, come with me and get salvation."

"No, thank you," Martin said, impulsively. "I guess there isn't any more than you need for yourself."

He pushed the man aside and walked quickly to the door, trampling on a pair of feet that projected into the aisle while their owner was on his knees praying with a young, hysterical girl.

At the door Martin paused and looked back. The excitement was still on, and the woman who had been rolling by the altar was now in a dead faint.

The scene disgusted him. He hastened into the normal atmosphere of the street; out under the placid sky, with its marshalled starry hosts and its evidences of omnipotent quiet. He filled his lungs with pure air. He regained a mental equilibrium.

And he was still of this mind when the family assembled at breakfast the next morning. He said but little about the meeting, either to the judge or Mrs. Wright; and spoke only of the evident sincerity of Mr. Morris, commenting on his strange influence over the people, and evading the subject of his own impressions. He silently resolved to discuss that question of the personality of God with the judge, if an opportunity were offered; but during all that day he could not bring his thoughts into collected shape for such a conversation.

That evening, however, he went to the church earlier and secured a seat. It was just as well, he thought, not to introduce this great theme in his talks with the judge until he had obtained a clearer understanding of the preacher's meaning.

Brother Morris smiled broadly at him from the platform, before opening the service, and Martin was disappointed when he made no allusion to his previous subject, but presented yet another aspect of the religious problem. The new lesson was on man's duty to God. The main deduction lifted man to a higher plane. Mr. Morris declared that every human being was directly responsible to the Almighty, as a free-will agent. The discourse was logical from this viewpoint, and Martin could accept much of what the preacher said. His treatment carried the proposition into the realm of ethics, where Martin was more familiar with the idea, and he perceived weak points in the speaker's argument. But this effect was dispelled when, just before the invitation to "seekers" to "come forward," Brother Morris advanced to the altar-rail and said, with great impressiveness:

"'Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.' Our personal Father made manifest is our Saviour. Let us confess our faith in Him. All of you who have found salvation in Christ, stand up!" He lifted his hand in a gesture of mild command.

The members of the churches, the professors of religion of whatever denomination, arose. Only the "outsiders" remained seated.

Then, in a firmer and more commanding voice, the preacher shouted:

"Those now standing may sit down. Thank God for this evidence of His grace! Now, all of you who wish to be saved by the blood of the Lamb, who have not yet found Christ but who earnestly wish to do so, stand up!"

He lifted both hands imperatively. His gesture implied condemnation of those who dared to disobey him.

Martin sat still. The speaker's manner provoked antagonism; his mandate seemed like an imposition. Martin looked about him. Every person was standing, except those who had already avowed their faith. A wave of humiliation surged over him. He was the centre of observation. His face flamed with anger. Brother Morris pointed directly at him.

"My dear young brother, don't you want to join the host of the saved?"

Martin started up. He was impelled to meet this man on his own ground, and explain his attitude. This was a time for argument—not command. He was thrust into a wrong position before the public. He had the right of defence. He opened his lips in protest and began to speak; but his words were drowned in a volume of song, led by the deep bass of Brother Morris:

"'Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing thy praise.'"

Martin sank down into his seat. He hid his burning face in his hand. He had been defrauded of a right. The trick was cowardly, but he would challenge this man to a public debate and argue him to silence. As he sat there, his mind running rapidly on how to effect such a meeting, a fervent "Thank God" sounded in his ears. The people had mistaken his action. He was helpless. He vaguely heard the call for converts. Men and women were praying aloud, regardless of interruptions. Sobs and groans and pleas for mercy filled the room. Above all other noises roared the tones of Morris, uttering the phrases of the evangelist, like an engulfing tide.

Martin got up from his seat. A voice close to him cried out: "Another soul saved. Praise the Lord!" He looked furiously in the direction of the speaker. A man was on his knees, in the pew opposite, with uplifted face clutched in both hands. Martin turned from him, repelled by the sight. He hurried from the church, more offended than on the previous night.

"I am done with Methodism forever," he said, aloud, lifting his arms and sweeping them backward with a gesture of repulsion.

But Methodism was not done with him. It was publicly declared next day that "Martin Brook had found religion"; and the week that followed this scene was one of agony to him. He learned that the people of Sandy Hill, not understanding his real motive in standing up before the congregation, had assumed that he was "converted." By his unintentional attitude of penitence in the meeting, according to these reports, he had expressed a wish to find salvation. To rise for prayers and afterwards sit with bowed head were evidences of a regenerated soul.

Pride struggled within him to announce why he had stood up in the meeting; but the sentiment of the town was so strongly voiced that the moral courage of a martyr alone would have sufficed to carry him through an admission of his true intention.

Besides, did he not desire salvation? The religious instinct in his nature quickened into life — became paramount in his thoughts. But he could not bring himself to face the possible cynicism or contempt of the judge by telling of this change.

He must battle it out in secret with that personal God, whose nature had become that of a vengeful Deity.

He avoided the meetings, but the contest raged within him. The idea of an angry personal God became overmastering. It grew on him like an impending terror. He could not escape from it. Sleepless and haggard, he was an object of anxiety to Mrs. Wright, who was restrained from speaking by the manifest wish for silence on his part.

Judge Northcote, who had been watching Martin ever since that first night, and who realized that a false move was perilous, now came forward. He felt that it was time to speak.

"What is it, Martin, that is distressing you?" he said, when they were alone in the office. "You seem perturbed. Or are you discontented with your work?"

"My dear benefactor," cried Martin, the tears coming into his eyes from the intensity of feeling which had been so long repressed, "discontented—after all you have done and are doing for me? I am more than grateful—and it is that very fact that disturbs me now."

"How can this be?" the judge asked, calmly.

"Why, sir, suppose that I were to differ with you in belief—in opinion?" Martin ventured.

"I have tried to cultivate your mind on broad lines," Mr. Northcote replied.

"But you do not believe in the personality of God," Martin said, with earnestness.

Judge Northcote was silent a moment, his head resting in his hand, as he sat in deep thought at his desk.

"I can conceive of nothing more improbable," he said, slowly, "than the Methodistic doctrine of the personality of God. But I am growing to believe in the personality of man, my dear Martin, as I study your developing mind." He smiled sadly. "Life is a problem too deep for me to solve, and would it not be vast egotism for me to profess ability to solve the mystery of death and God?" He tapped his snuff-box lightly, without opening the lid.

But to a mind like Martin's, and to one in his present mood, the negative reasoning was only an aggravation. To whom could he turn for help and counsel if not to this man, whose life-long study of philosophy would seem to have fitted him for the office of adviser? Was religion, then, something apart from the intellect? If man were the highest form of God's creation, and the intellectual man the highest type of the mortal, was not this failure to see the truth a confession of God's own failure?

Martin could not go to Mrs. Wright with this problem. He knew that her conception of religious faith was bounded by a creed which did not sanction his emotional disturbance. Her advice would but send him to Mr. Coulter, and in the rector's spiritual curriculum he saw no hope of aid.

And yet he must speak, or die. He was trembling on the verge of this intense despair when there came to his mind the image of Mary. Why had he not thought of her before?

He hurried over to the doctor's. There, under the wide-spreading shade of the great maples, on a rustic seat, with a bit of tatting in her busy hands, Mary sat, the picture of a soul at peace.

"Oh, Mary," he cried, as he flung himself on the grass at her feet, "you seem like the embodiment of contentment!"

"Aren't you feeling well?" she asked. "You seem distressed. Let me get you a cooling drink. These first warm days are so enervating." She rose to carry out her hospitable intention.

"No, sit down, just as you were, and let me look at you," he pleaded, half demanding. "Don't do that work." He took the ivory shuttle from her hand.

"You alarm me, Martin. What is the matter?"

"I alarm myself," he replied. Then, with his head on his hand, as he reclined on his elbow: "Do you believe that God is an angry, revengeful, cruel personality?"

"Are you so deeply impressed by Mr. Morris?" she asked.

"That evades my question," he said, with a frown.

"Pardon me," she said, gently. "I do not believe in that idea of God. To me, the Deity is a loving father. You know how I love and venerate my father, and I can conceive of no more divine a being than one who is infinitely good in all that my father represents of good, and without the human weaknesses of hate, revenge, malice, and selfishness."

"God is infinite Justice: we are always deserving of punishment," Martin declared.

"God is Love," Mary said, softly.

"Oh!" cried Martin, springing up. "The infinite mystery and contradiction of it all! Why can't some one be sent to tell us the ultimate 'How to believe'?"

"One has been sent," she said. "Martin, why not accept the teaching of Christ himself without trying to solve the riddles that man has made? You know that father and I are not orthodox, but we are happy in our own simple faith in the mercy of God."

"I had hoped you could tell me how to believe," Martin said, going slowly away. "But you can do no more than the judge or Mrs. Wright. It is always the same: 'Believe! Believe!' and never a word as to how to gain belief."

"Become as a little child, and learn first how to love," she said; but Martin was already beyond the sound of her low voice.

And so he remained to the voices about him during the weeks of this period of disquiet. Unable to sleep, fevered, oppressed, one night he sat by his window, struggling alone with the question that seemed fated never to be solved. The waning moon stared at him from a hazy sky. The room became a prison. He cautiously opened his chamber door and went softly down the stairs. The house maddened him with its silence. He must have freedom.

Out over the moonlit lawn, across the grass, into the deserted street, and towards the open country, he hurried on, pursued by the tormenting questions that had robbed him of his peace. He paid no heed to where he was going—his only thought to be where walls could not stifle him.

Nature was sleeping. The only sign of life was the baying of a hound borne on the still night air. Suddenly the sound of water broke upon his senses. He paused. In the valley below, subdued by the shadows of the cliff, he saw the dim outlines of the ruined mill. He became conscious that he stood on the edge of the old rollway.

The years dropped from him. Again he was the boy whose life was saved at this very spot. That feeling of awful peril he had experienced came back to him, the crashing log, the thought of death.

"He saves our lives from destruction that we may glorify Him!" The preacher's words were on his lips. He shouted them aloud. Why had he been saved from death?

A whippoorwill answered the echo of his cry. An owl hooted in the woods. The whir of insects and the mysterious hum and rustle of the unseen myriads came all at once to his ears. Nature was neither dead nor sleeping. Again he listened for the Voice of the solitude; again he realized that there was about and beyond another realm—the abode of never-ceasing life. Only the blindness and dumbness of mortality shut him from that region of the immortal.

He stood alone with God.

He flung himself upon the ground in agony of the new birth. He wrestled dumbly with the spirit.

And as he grovelled in the darkness, the distant hills took on the tint of morning. He did not see the gleam. The heights grew radiant with a coming glory. Darkness skulked away and hid herself in the ravines. The river caught the reflection in the skies and lifted it upon a thousand joyous crests.

Martin arose. He faced the east. The majesty of the day was come.

The sun lifted itself above the horizon.

Martin raised his arms with a cry of joy, to greet the symbol of the Supreme. He had won the victory over Self. God was personal to him—the Truth had dawned.

"Oh, God! Help me to know Thy truth!"

Martin appeared at breakfast that morning somewhat tardily, but before the judge had left the table. He was calm, though pale. Nothing was said by any one to elicit explanation. Curiosity concerning another person's affairs was considered by the master of Elmhurst as something worse than a moral lapse—a vulgarity. Mrs. Wright's customary inquiry about the health of each, with a slight increase of interest towards Martin, and his smiling assurance that he felt better than he had for many days past, closed the morning's customary incident of ceremony.

The revival meetings came to an end within the month, through exhaustion. Brother Morris called on Martin at the office and asked after his spiritual welfare, remarking upon the absence of his young friend from the closing services, and suggesting that no new convert should miss such opportunities for grace.

The judge was not present at this interview. The preacher had evidently chosen the moment intentionally. Martin listened respectfully to the words of exhortation and replied quietly that the subject was one he could best determine in his own way and time. His disposition to argue with the man was gone, with the passing of the agony and the stress of emotion on the rollway.

He felt that he had emerged from the trial by emotional fires and now stood in the cooler atmosphere of the intellectual ordeal. He must satisfy reason before admitting his acceptance of a new doctrine, whatever the consequences to himself might be. He took up a course of reading in theology and ecclesiastical history: the dogmas of the Established Church, the creeds of the dissenting bodies, and especially the ideas and works of Wesley, with the rise and growth of Methodism.

At last, assured of his position, and convinced of the personality of God, he was prepared to lay the subject of his religious awakening before Judge Northcote. They were seated on the porch, one midsummer evening, when the theme was broached.

Martin made plain confession of his experiences and conclusions.

"I believe," he said, summing up his story, "there is truth in the Methodist form of the doctrine of the fatherhood of God. The idea of a divine personality is comforting. I know that you differ with me in this, and I fear I shall incur your displeasure; but I have fought the battle in my own way and must ask you to bear with me. Do not think, sir, that I set up my opinions against yours in a spirit of egotism. My gratitude towards you and my admiration of your mind and scholarship are, as I have already told you, the sources of my keenest suffering in the acceptance of this change of thought. I seem presumptuous in this independence of mind; but it is, when all is said, only the exercise of free-will in accordance with Methodism."

The judge smiled. "I am a Methodist in spots. Mr. Morris says I am an infidel—the hardest term that can be applied in his vocabulary. But I am far from infidelity. In my devotion to the idea of Law, I urge all men to the conservative observance of existing systems. I am that anomaly—a radical conservative."

"Can such a man do the best work for humanity?" Martin asked.

"Such men are a necessity. They are the balance-wheels—the counterpoise of society," the judge replied. "They do not perform great works; they prevent the destruction of things, until there is time for the slow unfolding of new truths."

The judge lapsed into silence. Martin did not dare to interrupt his thoughts.

"My dear boy," the judge said, after an interval, "we have reached a time when I must speak of a more personal matter. There has been an unfoldment here, under this roof, during the past ten years. You have grown from boyhood to manhood. You know that I have given you a home, have educated you, and prepared you for a life of usefulness, but you do not comprehend my view of the case. It was not charity nor generosity that moved me at first, but the law. Justice had been outraged. You were entitled to certain conditions, but were denied them. You were bound legally to a brute. I rescued you without intending to do more than if I were opening the cage-door and liberating an animal. But Fate—Law—your personal God—ordained a different process. You were thrust into my orbit when I was a disappointed man who covered his wounds with the cloak of hauteur. You have no knowledge of my past life—of what I have suffered. You do not know of the brief revival of my hopes when at last I perceived, in my poor blindness, that my sister's child was something human. I have learned much in watching you when you did not know my purpose. Unconsciously you have grown into my heart—you have taken little Jimmy's place in my future plans."

The judge paced the length of the portico, his silk handkerchief in his right hand. Martin sat immovable, a new thought sweeping over him. Heir to Elmhurst!

Judge Northcote thrust his handkerchief back into his pocket and resumed his seat. He was calm once more.

"Martin," he said, "it is my intention to make you my successor."

Martin could not speak. His breath came quick.

"There is no one on earth to question me," the judge went on. "I am depriving no one of a right. My sister will be your loving mother; and by this change, making both of you happy, I shall go on in the monotony of my life with a renewal of interest. I don't care what church you join; an orderly method is essential. Adopt the creed you can accept. Go into affairs—the building of a character befitting your station. I have but one request to make and one condition to impose: you will take the honored name of Northcote, settle permanently at Elmhurst, and so conduct yourself as to maintain the dignity of our house. Are you willing to become my son?"

The judge held out his hand. Martin rose and grasped it.

"Father!" he whispered.

Chapter X

FIVE years may span an almost infinite variety of change in every human life. It has been shown what these five years have done for Martin Brook, in his movement from bondage to youthful independence—from the rags and cruelty of legal serfdom to the luxury and love of Elmhurst—since the time he first met Helen Stafford. And yet his growth has been confined to the narrow limits of a village and the limitations of a single mind—George Northcote's cultured and expanded mind, but none the less a single, individual mind. He had not learned the benefits of contact with the world.

The experiences that came to Helen Stafford during these same five years were very different. She was older than Martin by two years or more, but wiser in worldly ways beyond the mere measure of time. She had unconsciously revealed this fact, and he had perceived it at their one meeting. Now she was home again, with five years of life abroad added to the knowledge she then possessed—five years of such freedom as an invalid mother and a succession of paid chaperons alone could make possible to her. She had remained in Paris long after Colonel Stafford's official duties in England were ended, completing her studies as the mood seized her; and now was home, in Albany, once more, a stranger in her own land. The mother's influence had long since ceased to be more than a negative approval of the daughter's positive will; and here, where conventional life was not always observed, she astounded the more careful matrons by her unconventional daring.

Men admired her; mothers with unmarried daughters looked askance at her. Yet there was never a whisper of scandal against her, although, while it was known that she had declined several offers of marriage, she frankly admitted that her pleasures lay in realizing her power over men. She confessed a weariness of a society that was disposed to question her right to freedom, and wished to be away from what she called the provincialism of her home.

She was in this mood when a letter came from her aunt inviting her to visit at the rectory. As she turned the invitation over in her mind, she mused: "Perhaps this is a happy escape from being bored to death." Her former visit had been so brief that only the faintest recollection of it lingered. She had entirely forgotten Martin Brook.

She wrote to Mrs. Coulter, accepting the proffered hospitality. To her mind, the visit was the merest incident, but to the people of Sandy Hill her presence was an event. She thrilled the little village with her startling personality and her indifference to public opinion, and she accepted or declined the invitations of the society leaders as the whim seized her. The matrons pronounced her "very peculiar"; the girls admired her as a model of fashion; the men said she was not beautiful, but bewildering. Yet in spite of this reception she remained for some time apart from their life and declined to join the social set in their small diversions.

Mrs. Coulter could not conceal her distress at Helen's attitude. This startling niece was not like the girl she once knew, for now she was not willing, of all things, to be entertained. The rector, when his wife appealed to him, conceded his inability to cope with so perplexing a problem. Helen's sojourn in Paris, he admitted, had evidently produced a marked effect.

Meanwhile, the only pleasure Helen asked for at the hands of her friends was the inexplicable one of being left to herself. If she chose to drive about in the pony carriage—a luxury afforded Mrs. Coulter through the kindness of the judge, who appreciated her care of the needy parishioners—or to remain indoors, her will was law; and a law, too, of her own making. She declared that the rectory was a most charming place in the summer, and her favorite spot, these hot summer days, was a corner in her aunt's sitting-room, where the wide, low windows were embowered in roses.

And here, on an old colonial settle, with high carved back and curved arms, on a mass of cushions, gathered from about the house and piled luxuriantly around her, Helen was lying one morning, the perfume of roses borne in upon her through the open lattice. A gentle breeze stirred the dark curls that clustered upon her ears and forehead and swept in masses across her breast. Indolent and sensuous in this abandonment to the comfort of the moment, she was found by Mrs. Coulter. Her morning gown was like a web of silk, clinging to every outline of her full figure. Her arms were bare, except for the puffs on the shoulders, and the firm white neck was partly covered by a long silk scarf with fringed ends. Her small feet were encased in low slippers and crossed up the ankle with white ribbons.

"Why, my dear Helen," her aunt said, displeased at the girl's appearance, "don't you think it would be cooler if I drew the shades?"

"No, no," Helen protested. "I revel in this delicious sunlight. See, isn't this coloring exquisite?"

"It is rather warm, I should say," Mrs. Coulter urged.

"I love the warmth," Helen declared. "Leave them as they are, please. The rose-bushes give shade enough. I really believe I am a soul in the wrong body. I must have been barbaric once." She closed her eyes.

"I don't like you to say such things, my dear," Mrs. Coulter said, moving around, adjusting the furniture where Helen had shifted it from the formal order.

"No?" Helen said, her eyes half open, and one fair arm tossed above her head, the flowing sleeve of her morning gown fallen away from it. "How very energetic you are, aunty. But you have a delightfully artistic eye. That combination of color in the vines is charming."

"That was not my work," Mrs. Coulter replied, with slight asperity. "The former rector's wife planted the garden."

"I should like to have known the woman," Helen said, rearranging the folds of her gown across her breast.

"I was wondering, Helen, if you would like a drive on the river-road," Mrs. Coulter suggested, a slight frown on her placid face which seldom showed displeasure. "I have some parish visits to make."

"Please, aunty," Helen pleaded, in her authoritative way, "don't think of entertaining me. Let me enjoy this blissful quiet. I never before realized the meaning of June weather. Let me get my fill of it, while you and Uncle Rufus look after your dear parishioners."

"But, my dear Helen," Mrs. Coulter protested, "there is something more than that to do. There are people you should meet. I have a note from Mrs. Wright, asking after you, and telling of an accident she has suffered, which prevents her calling here at present. She has had the misfortune to sprain her ankle."

"I am sorry," Helen said, with polite indifference.

"She is my dearest friend," Mrs. Coulter remarked. "I must call on her. Won't you go, too? She is Judge Northcote's sister, you know—at Elmhurst; that charming place you admired so much."

"Elmhurst? Northcote?" Helen mused. Then laughing lightly: "Yes? What has become of that boy—the one who used to live there—I forget his name. The one who came to that little party." Her eyes twinkled with a revived recollection of that scene—the boy's unsuppressed look of admiration of her. She lifted her hands and deftly plied her fingers among the coils of her hair.

"Do you mean Mr. Brook?" Mrs. Coulter prompted, a trace of reproof in her tone.

"Yes, that is it. *Mr.* Brook?" Helen laughed. "I had utterly forgotten his name. I remember him as—"

"You will have a chance to refresh your memory, my dear," Mrs. Coulter said, with the resentment of a village matron who hears a local criticism. "Mr. Brook is the most promising young man in Sandy Hill. Mr. Coulter says they are already mentioning his name in connection with the Legislature, and that, you know, is the first step towards prominence in public life."

"A prodigy? How entertaining. Tell me about him, deary. Does he still wear his hands so awkwardly?"

"I shall say nothing about him, Helen, if you talk in that way."

"Don't be angry. Come, tell me more," and Helen nestled into an attitude of comfortable listening, her cheek, on which the flush of the long sea-voyage by sailing-vessel still lingered, resting in her firm round hand.

"Mr. Brook has a fine future in prospect. We are proud of him, and Mr. Northcote appears to favor him as his heir since—" Mrs. Coulter began with confidence, but Helen interrupted her, leaning forward:

"Why, this is growing romantic!"

"It is mere rumor, of course," her aunt continued, with a little nod to quiet her conscience at revealing something Mr. Coulter had cautioned her not to speak of, "but there are reasons for thinking that the report is true. At any rate, Martin has made wonderful advancement," she asserted, earnestly. Then, reaching firmer ground, she told of the letters in the *Sentinel*, which everybody had discussed, and ended by saying: "Mr. Coulter told me that Mr. Graham was left in a most embarrassing predicament."

"Graham? Do you mean that Sidney Graham?" Helen asked, more interested, her chin resting in both palms. "Why, I recall him very distinctly, now you speak of him. Quite a well-dressed boy, with plenty of confidence in himself." She settled back to a contemplative posture, a dreamy look in her eyes. "And you say that Elmhurst may belong to this Martin Brook? Rather a pleasing sound—that name. Elmhurst must be a splendid place for entertaining during the summer. Is the house often filled with people—guests from a distance, you know? Is Judge Northcote still reputed to be wealthy?"

"The one serious criticism we make of the judge is that he rarely entertains," Mrs. Coulter replied, confused at the volley of questions. "He is very wealthy—and benevolent. He is quite fond of your Uncle Rufus and—"

"Yes, I presume so. The church and your house show that; but Judge Northcote must be growing old," the girl said, softly. "He is still unmarried? Has he no idea of—"

"Oh, the judge will never marry," Mrs. Coulter replied, smiling. "He is fifty now."

Helen flung her arms above her head on the cushions. Presently she said: "There are, of course, near relatives? Mr. Northcote's family connections are large, no doubt?"

"Only Mrs. Wright, his sister, the lady I spoke of a moment ago."

"Does she—is she friendly to this young Mr. Brook?" Helen asked, quickly.

"She loves him as her own son," Mrs. Coulter said, positively.

"How old is he?"

"He is in his twenty-fourth year, I believe."

The girl took on a pose of indifference.

"Tell me about the other—about Mr. Graham," she demanded.

"There is nothing to be said, my dear," Mrs. Coulter returned, with a drawing down of the corners of her mouth.

"Oh," said Helen, rising, with a look of decision in her face.

She went over to the window that commanded a view of Elmhurst. "No mistress of that grand place?" she whispered to herself.

"There are the ponies coming," Mrs. Coulter said, glancing out through the open window. "Don't you think you would like to go with me, dear, on my rounds this morning? If you hurry, we can get back before the sun is too high."

"I am ready—for *anything!*" Helen said, turning quickly and throwing her arms wide with a sweeping gesture. "Anything, my dear!" She kissed Mrs. Coulter demonstratively and hastened to her room to dress for the drive.

As Mrs. Coulter had assured her, the drive was indeed a delightful one, as they made the circuit of the little place. Helen, of course, remained in the carriage, while Mrs. Coulter did her calls of charitable duty. However, the families needing her care were not numerous; the work was soon performed, and then came a breezy hour on the river-road, within the shade of the wood.

In the great bend, where the view from the highlands was well worth pausing to see, they drew up to admire the landscape, and just at that moment a man came rapidly towards them, mounted on an iron-gray horse, which started proudly and curvetted at sight of the carriage.

The rider saluted the ladies.

"Mr. Brook!" exclaimed Mrs. Coulter. "I am very glad you happened this way."

"It was fortunate for me," Martin smiled. "Did you ever see a more perfect day?"

"Helen, you remember Mr. Brook, I am sure. Do you need a second introduction to my niece, Martin?"

"I certainly do not," Martin said, earnestly, bowing low. He sprang from his horse, flinging the reins over his arm, and went to the carriage. Helen saw the old-time look of admiration leap into his eyes.

"I am not vain enough to fancy you have remembered me all these years," Helen said, holding out her hand, with most deceiving shyness. Then, as Martin grasped it: "Are you quite sure you haven't forgotten me?" she asked.

"I have remembered you always, Miss Stafford," he said, seriously. "There have not been so many events in my quiet life that I could forget you." His face took on a merry look. "Especially our first conversation, which was, unfortunately, my only one with you. Don't you recall my volubility?"

"No," she said, with a bewitching wrinkle of the brows.

Martin looked straight into her eyes. Was she making sport of him? Did she mean that she remembered how stupid he was that night of the party?

"Well, perhaps it *is* better to forget some things—the annoyance one brings on one's self, for example," he remarked, laughingly.

Helen shook her head. "I really don't know what you mean," she said, with quick perception of his thoughts. Martin remained silent, searching her face with frank and fearless show of pleasure.

Mrs. Coulter broke in, cheerily: "Isn't this sunlight on the river perfectly delightful? I am glad I am alive!"

"So am I," Martin said.

"Glad that aunty is alive?" Helen asked, saucily.

"Yes—and that I—that we all are," he said, pointedly. "By-the-way, Mrs. Coulter, I heard Mrs. Wright planning to call on you and Miss Stafford, but she—"

"Yes," Mrs. Coulter spoke quickly, "and we intended to call on her this morning, but we were so interested in the drive. It is too late now. But please tell her we shall do so soon." Then, with a little gesture of pleading: "Won't you come and see us? Mr. Coulter was saying only yesterday that you were neglectful. Can't you come this afternoon and take tea?"

"Thank you and him," said Martin, again looking into Helen's eyes. "If you desire me to do so, I will come."

Helen bowed her head in assent, a glance and a smile answering him more fully than words.

"Good-bye, then, until five o'clock," Mrs. Coulter said, as she chirruped to the ponies and they started off.

Martin stood by the road-side, looking in their direction, until long after they had disappeared. The horse pawed impatiently and rubbed his head on his master's shoulder. Martin mounted and rode slowly away.

"The years have made no change," he said aloud, "except to add more charms." He spoke to the horse and dashed along, a new thought aroused in his mind. "She will not find me now a bashful, ungainly boy."

Mrs. Coulter meanwhile was saying, "Do you think I over-estimated the man, Helen?" The girl, absorbed in her own thoughts, answered them, not her aunt:

"Evidently a gentleman — rides well — fine eyes — good-looking — carries himself properly — seems to be athletic—"

The ponies started at a scurrying rabbit. Mrs. Coulter pulled them in. Helen's words had been lost in the rattle of the wheels on the stony road. "I beg your pardon; you were saying—"

"Oh, nothing, dear."

But she was thinking many thoughts that kept the color in her cheeks; a color that remained even after the tea was served that afternoon on the vine-clad porch of the rectory. For, as she studied the man opposite her at table, there was not a suggestion of the boy she remembered meeting years before; there was no annoying sense to her in his presence. He seemed restful, cultured, manly. He was quite in accord with her idea of a gentleman. And Elmhurst was certainly a lovely place.

Mr. Coulter was regretfully obliged to excuse himself, because of some church meeting; and Mrs. Coulter found occasion to leave the young people to themselves, but notwithstanding this deprivation, Martin found that Helen's experiences abroad were themes sufficient for the time, since he proved to be with her, as with the judge, a ready listener.

"But there is no place like this," Helen declared, in concluding a description of some foreign scene. "I love the Hudson."

"Could you be contented *here?*" Martin asked.

"In America? Why, I am an American, you know," she said.

"I mean in the smaller life of such a place as this?"

"Oh, one has a great deal to choose from," she answered. "The world comes to those who entertain it."

They were still discussing Sandy Hill when Mrs. Coulter reappeared.

"We were talking of the beauties of the place, Mrs. Coulter," Martin said, "and I am sorry you do not like the saddle, for there are so many pretty scenes about here."

"Like it? But think how I look on horseback, Mr. Brook. Now, if I were as lithe as Helen—"

"We have some animals at Elmhurst that I am sure will please Miss Stafford, if she cares to ride," Martin ventured.

"Oh, don't let my—well, my *tastes*—interfere with Helen's enjoyments," Mrs. Coulter urged. "I naturally prefer the carriage."

"You are always so unselfish, aunty," Helen said, sweetly. "I shall be glad to go in the saddle, Mr. Brook, and the sooner the better, if my tastes alone are to be consulted."

"I place the stables and Enoch at your command," Martin replied.

"Enoch? Must I join the throng of the prophets?"

"We will reverse the order of things, and make this prophet our follower, if you consent," he suggested.

"I prefer the modern way," she said, meeting his gaze with a smile that sent his pulses bounding.

"Then if my weather-wise Enoch promises a fair day to-morrow, will you let me show you what I meant by our beautiful scenery?"

"Yes," she said.

That night, Martin, his arrangements made for the coming day, and Enoch's solemn pledge of "mighty fine wedder, Marse Martin," to encourage him, was not so peaceful in his sleep as a healthy young man should be. He tossed and tumbled, but finally dozed off and dreamed that his awkwardness had returned in the form of a ghost, and that a dazzling woman was talking to him; but to save his life he couldn't catch her words. They seemed like a mocking laugh, which somehow appeared to cause Mary to be distressed.

But Helen, as her thoughts reverted to the day's events, found nothing in them to disturb her rest.

Chapter XI

As Martin came down the street towards the rectory on his iron-gray the next morning, he saw Mary Whittaker coming along the walk, on her way to Elmhurst.

She looked up at him with a bright smile, and stopped, just as Enoch passed by on a hack—across whose broad flanks hung a pair of bulging saddle-bags—leading Hebe, the pride of the judge's stables, under a side-saddle.

Martin drew up and spoke to Mary, on whose face a half-questioning look now checked the smile. Martin realized with a sudden twinge of conscience that he had utterly forgotten Mary in the pleasure of meeting Helen Stafford. He felt that he ought to have asked her to go with them; yet in the same instant he admitted secretly that he did not want her to go. But there was the consciousness of a discourtesy—almost a disloyalty—to the girl who was never selfishly forgetful of him; and the fact that he really did not wish her, or any one, to share his day's pleasure with Miss Stafford stung him.

"Oh," he said, "I'm going to take Miss Stafford for a ride up the river-road."

"I'm sure she will enjoy it," Mary replied, quietly, "Miss Stafford looks well in her habit. I saw her on the rectory porch as I came by, and she told me she was going to ride."

"Did Miss Stafford say she was going with me?"

"No," said Mary.

"Well, you see, I met her—met Mrs. Coulter and Miss

Stafford—yesterday, and—" He hesitated, shifting in his saddle.

"I hope you'll have a nice time, Martin. The day is just right for a good view—so clear and cool."

She was smiling again when she resumed her walk, and Martin did not see the look in her eyes—a look that would have revealed more of anxiety for his welfare than of disappointment at his neglect.

But Helen Stafford had perceived something in Mary's manner during the short time of her stay in the village, and her casual renewal of their acquaintance. She had already discovered that her own indifference to Sandy Hill was no criterion to the interest the young people felt for each other in this little sphere; that love and its attendant emotions were as vital here as in the salons of Paris; and in her review of those former days, now that she had met Martin Brook and learned of his position in the village—had heard from Mrs. Coulter of his prospects and ambitions—she had cast about for the threads of a romance she knew must exist somewhere in his young life. She had decided that Mary, of all the girls who had called on her since she came here, was the one most likely to interest such a man as Martin Brook; and since he had chanced to re-enter her orbit, the presence of a personality like Mary's added a dash of piquancy to the thought of making him concerned in herself.

Helen had watched Mary as she went along to the meeting with Martin, and had understood the scene with instinctive comprehension, as though the words were audible to her. So, when Martin reached the rectory, she was prepared for her part. She wished first to be assured, in her own mind, that the influence of her power over men was extended to him; and then, before committing herself, to be confirmed in the fact that he was, indeed, the heir to Elmhurst.

Martin's momentary feeling of regret at his unpremeditated slight of Mary, who had hitherto been his companion on such little excursions, was lost in the effect Helen produced on him as she came down to the gate, with the long skirt of her riding-dress thrown gracefully over her arm, her head crowned by a red velvet flat Scotch hat with a puffed edge, set well back on her dark curls.

"Good-morning," he said, alighting and taking her hand. "I've planned a day up the river, and Enoch has a few things in the bags to prevent our starving."

"That will be delightful, I'm sure," she said, as he lifted her to the saddle. "Good-bye, aunty."

Mrs. Coulter had sanctioned her going, and was standing on the porch. Martin raised his hat to her and sprang into his seat. Enoch was already disappearing in the direction of the chosen by-road.

A by-road known to those whose love of nature took them from the dusty highway, with its heavy carts and jolting stages, out into the shady woods — a scarcely perceptible track along the highlands bordering the river, where the horses' feet were muffled in the damp mold of countless years — a road unused and winding about with the uncertainty of ever finding any place, and yet sure to lead to the most entrancing spots in all the region. A road, too, that brought them first to a place which opened up a view of valley, river, hills, and sky—an old, abandoned rollway and a deserted mill—a place suggestive of activities now unknown.

There was something in the atmosphere of the place that caused Helen to draw rein and sit silently gazing about her, with a strange sensation of awe in the solitude.

"This is a familiar spot to me," Martin said, gravely. "I have met with the most extraordinary experiences of my life right here."

"Tell me of them," Helen commanded.

"They may not interest you," he said.

"You interest me," she replied.

"Do I? Can you see in me something more than a stammering boy, awkward and bashful?"

"Yes."

"Old Enoch saved my life, down there," he said, pointing to the pool.

"Your life? How?"

He told her of that day; and then, scarcely above a whisper, spoke of that other scene—his night of religious agony and the dawn of Truth.

"This is not a very cheerful theme," he concluded. "I am still in doubt on many points, although I am a Methodist by profession." He waited a moment, expecting her to speak; but her face was averted.

"Tell me," he said, "do you believe in a personal God, who rules our lives? Do you object to Methodism? Since meeting you, I have felt that you were brought into my life for a purpose—"

The horses gave a frightened start, as an object swooped before them on the wing and disappeared in the woods beyond.

"What is that?" Helen cried, recovering her seat instantly.

"Only a big hawk," Martin said.

"Let us go," Helen said; "the place seems uncanny."

She touched her horse with the bridle. Hebe, fleet and sure-footed, carried her away like the wind. Martin overtook her, but the subject foremost in his mind was not renewed. "Will she approve of Methodism?" he asked himself.

They continued for some time along the wooded path, without his finding opportunity to speak of more than objective things, until at last they came upon a cosey nook in the forest, where Enoch stood, bowing and grinning, as he pointed to the luncheon spread on the white linen that concealed a flat rock he had selected for a table.

"How is the spring, Enoch?" Martin asked, dismounting and helping Helen down, while the servant tied the horses in a shady spot.

"Dat spring, sah, am fine. Fo' gracious, I hain't 'sperienced no sich day for yeahs. Seems lak de good ole times, Marse Martin."

"A spring?" Helen asked. "Hark! Is that the sound of falling water?"

"Yes," said Martin. "There is the most delicious spring over yonder in all the country. Would you like to see it? Here, Enoch, give me that pail. I'll get the water."

"Yis, sah," Enoch grinned, handing him the pail. "I reckon I's needed here mo'n I is dar, under de condition of circumstances." As Helen hurried away, guided by the sound of the murmuring water, Martin following with the swinging pail and calling out warnings about the tangled roots and vines.

"Oh, how perfectly charming!" Helen exclaimed, when they came with unlooked-for suddenness upon the miniature falls that plunged over the moss-grown rocks, down in the dell—a busy little stream, that took on all the manners of a mountain torrent, pouring from a spring in the river-bank, and dashing in tiny impetuousness into a dark pool below. The basin was in shadow, forming a mirror of its calm surface beyond the swirl of the fall.

"It's called the 'Cataract of the Fairies'," Martin explained.

"Yes?" Helen said, bending to catch the sound. "I can hear the voices of the little folk."

"Don't trust them," said Martin. "They may tell stories."

"No; they are too near nature for that wickedness," she sighed.

"If you believe in them, then, let me fix a seat here for you, where we can listen together. They may have a word for me, too."

He rolled a log near the brink of the pool and Helen sat down. From where he stood, on the other side of the pool, he could see the reflection of her face in the still water. He could not see his own eyes, but the angle brought him in line for hers.

The sunlight sifted through the dense foliage above them and lay in quivering, golden disks on the moist leafage. Birds came near in fearlessness, and seemed to welcome the visitors to their solitudes with songs of understanding.

"There is a legend connected with this spot," Martin continued. "The Indian maidens used to come here to see the faces of their true-lovers. It was said that if they made the wish, with eyes closed, and then suddenly opened them on the pool, they could see the one—"

"Do you believe in legends?" Helen asked, gazing at his unconscious reflection in the pool.

"I believe in this one," he said, smilingly. "Please shut your eyes and try it."

He moved a step, thinking to bring his face into her view.

"Don't stir!" she cried. "Stay where you are."

"If you command it," he said, disappointed and misunderstanding her.

She rose. "A very pretty story. Enoch must be getting anxious about us." She ran back to the place where Enoch stood. "Is luncheon served?"

"Thank you, miss; ebberything's ready, miss."

They seated themselves on the grass, but Martin's mind was not on the luncheon. "Miss Stafford, we must plan a longer trip. I know a place above Glens Falls—"

A crackling in the bushes caused him to turn his face towards the sound, just as Sidney Graham came in sight.

Graham looked handsome in his shooting-suit, complete in every detail. He carried a gun and was followed by his dogs.

Martin stood up and greeted him coolly; but Graham passed him with a quick nod and went briskly up to Helen.

"Miss Stafford! This is a most pleasant surprise."

"Mr. Graham, I believe? It is a long time since we met."

"It has seemed long to me," he said, bowing over her hand.

"Enoch," said Martin, indicating—"a place for Mr. Graham." Then, with restrained courtesy: "I am sorry we have provided so scant a luncheon."

"Oh, don't trouble yourself about me," Graham returned, throwing himself on the ground near Helen, who had meanwhile seated herself comfortably.

"I am sure there is enough for all," Helen said, taking on the air of hostess, and serving Graham to the best of everything before them. She perceived the coolness between the men, and looked at Martin, trying to gain a clew to the situation. Graham's audacity pleased her. Mrs. Coulter's story of the letters in the *Sentinel* came to her mind, but that seemed to her an insufficient reason for the open hostility of the men. In her eyes, Mr. Graham was a gentleman. She was not aware that Judge Northcote's censure meant ostracism in Sandy Hill society, or that the feeling between these men was of life-long standing.

But she did realize that the pleasure of the picnic was marred. The forced and formal conversation, and Martin's punctilious observance of his unwelcome duties as host to Graham, caused her to quickly end the scene.

When Enoch brought up the horses, she went close to Martin and said: "You are not offended at me?"

"By no means; that would be impossible," he replied. "There is a lack of friendliness between Mr. Graham and myself that makes his conduct inexplicable."

"Yes? I fancied all persons were friends in Sandy Hill."

"Unfortunately, not all," Martin observed, and stepped aside to see that the girths were secure on Hebe.

Graham improved the opportunity and came to Helen. "Of course Mr. Brook has shown you the view from the hill yonder?" he suggested.

"No, we have reserved that for another day."

"You are fond of the saddle, Miss Stafford?" he asked.

"Indeed I am," she replied with enthusiasm. "When I have a horse like this one, I love it."

"That is a fine mount," he said, "but I think I have an animal you would like even better."

"I am sure that is hardly possible," she said, patting Hebe's glossy neck.

Martin offered her his hand and lifted her to the saddle. As they rode away, he said to Graham: "I am sorry that we are unable to offer you a mount, Mr. Graham."

"Thank you, I prefer to walk," Graham replied. But he watched them until they were out of sight.

"The cad!" he muttered. "I'll take that girl away from him before I'm a week older."

And his boast was not an idle one. He came to the rectory, now that there was assurance of a reception, with the same indifference to the manner of his greeting by the Coulters, or regard for invitation, that he had shown the day in the grove. The superlative presumption of the man entertained Helen immensely. Besides, he did, indeed, have a finer saddler than the Northcote stables boasted, and she enjoyed her rides with him. He was always courteous and devoted. His appearance in the saddle was fine. As a gentleman of leisure, he was able to place himself at her service at times when Martin was engaged with business; and she still was unable to understand why her aunt and uncle disapproved of him.

It was equally difficult for the practical Mrs. Coulter to comprehend what this puzzling girl meant by her treatment of the two young men.

Helen smiled when her aunt tried to talk with her on the subject. "Why, aunty," she said, "you know you were urging me, only a few days ago, to show more interest in your people. You insisted on my being entertained. Mr. Graham does that, I am sure."

"That may be, my dear," Mrs. Coulter replied, "but do you think it advisable to be so often seen with him?"

"It might be worse," Helen said, disregarding her aunt's allusion to local gossip. "I admit he is at times wearing on one's nerves."

"I was not thinking of that, Helen," Mrs. Coulter said, "but of the difference between the two gentlemen. Mr. Brook appeared to be very much annoyed when he called yesterday and learned you were again riding with Mr. Graham. It has happened several times just so, and I imagine the other young folks notice it too."

"Yes?" Helen returned, getting up from her favorite place by the window and going to the writing-desk, where she sat silently for a moment looking over a list of names she had written, and then turned to Mrs. Coulter with her sweetest smile. "And I was thinking, aunty dear, of your kindness to me and of all you have done to make my visit a pleasant one, and I see now that you were right about the way to give me enjoyment."

"Why, Helen, you know that it is a pleasure to me to see you happy. I hope you have enjoyed the young people's society. I know they all like you."

"I am greatly pleased with them, and I'm sure you won't object to asking a few of them here to a little party on the lawn. The nights are beautifully moonlight now, and I must soon return home."

"I shall be glad to do it. We owe that courtesy—"

"We can easily arrange for twenty," Helen interrupted. "That includes all who have shown me courtesies."

"Let me see," her aunt began, "there are the—"

"Oh, here is the list," Helen replied. "Most of them mean only names to me; but they have called." She handed the slip of paper to Mrs. Coulter.

Her aunt read the list. "I see that you begin with Mr. Graham," she said, pointedly.

"He lives nearest to us," Helen explained.

"Mary Whittaker lives nearer, but you have her name near the last," her aunt remarked. "If proximity is the rule—"

"Not with a woman, deary," Helen said. "We think of them by the rule of chance." She went back to the settle and threw herself down on the cushions. "Yes," she said, "it is the right thing to do." She lay quietly looking out across the landscape, her eyes half closed, and then asked, suddenly, "Was he really annoyed?"

Mrs. Coulter glanced up from the list. "What did you say, dear?"

"Oh, nothing. Do you think it will annoy Uncle Rufus to have the people here?"

"Not in the least. He enjoys the young folks immensely. We must ask them informally, for to-morrow evening, while this pleasant weather lasts. I'll drive around this morning. Will you go with me, dear?"

"Certainly," she said; "shall we go at once?"

"Yes, dear; and I am amazed at your intuitive faculty of absorbing knowledge concerning people. Really, Helen, you have selected just the right ones," Mrs. Coulter said, enthusiastically, as she read the names over. "You seem to be an adept in bringing harmonious people together. I will add a few names, for my own sake, and the list will be complete."

"As you please," Helen replied. "Did you never discover that it is easier to entertain those who entertain themselves? I have watched these little affairs in the village, and almost every girl has shown her heart to me. Of course, all young men carry theirs in sight. Group your guests properly, my dear, and you have more leisure to enjoy yourself. I am not doing this entirely for the sake of pleasing the village."

"You are a strange girl, Helen," Mrs. Coulter remarked.

Chapter XII

As if to verify Mrs. Coulter's opinion of her, Helen revealed yet another aspect of her many-sided nature on the night of the party. The young people, to their surprise, found her to be something more than a gracious hostess; she was a Lady Bountiful of the heart, whose one aim in life appeared to be an affectionate consideration for their enjoyment. And within the atmosphere of this solicitude, the two men who held her most closely in mind became conscious of the fact that the time had come when they must determine her regard for them individually.

There had been no interchange of confidences between Helen and Mary on the subject of Martin's attentions. On the contrary, Helen repelled her, and to-night Mary came to the rectory in a state of unusual depression. She knew by her own observation how troubled Martin was at Hélen's evident preference for Sidney Graham, although he had not spoken to her of either Helen or Graham, nor had he shown signs of petty jealousy; yet, with a woman's instinct, Mary doubted Helen's sincerity.

On the night of the party, after the arrival of the company, and the first hour of formal meeting, Mary quietly slipped away from the people in the house to a seat in a corner of the lawn. There she sat for some time alone, recalling Helen's manner when greeting Martin and Sidney. It seemed to her that the men had been intentionally brought side by side, as if to estimate their qualities. She had noticed, too, the insistency of Graham and the reserve of Martin; and she was still mentally debating the meaning of all this when Martin came over the lawn to her.

"Why, Mary," he said, "what are you doing off here by yourself?"

"Oh, I was just—just thinking. Don't mind me, Martin," she said. "I am not quite myself to-night; but please don't let that interfere with your pleasure."

"Interfere with my pleasure?" he repeated, in a tone of mild rebuke. "Why, you know I can't enjoy anything when I see you looking so tired—or down-spirited." Then, with real anxiety: "Ought you to be out here? There is a heavy dew. Let me fetch your shawl."

She looked up at him in her gravely questioning way —without censure—and said, with a little laugh:

"You stupid boy! Can't you see I have my shawl about me?"

"Well, anything else, then?" he urged. "I'm going to read you a lesson on good cheer. I'm afraid you are not well. You looked pale and worried in the house."

"Did I? The room was warm, but it is delightful out here."

"You are always cheering me up when I get the blues," he protested, "and now you snuff me out when I try to cheer you. Tell me what's worrying you." He sat down beside her on the bench.

"Please don't be vexed at me," she said. "You mustn't claim all the right to monopolize the comforts of being miserable." She nodded across the lawn. "See what a good time every one is having. Miss Stafford has selected her company wisely; she is surely a genius."

"Yes," Martin assented, without enthusiasm. He seemed to have taken on Mary's depression.

"What a pretty picture this scene would make!" she remarked; but he remained silent.

The moonlight on the close-cut grass, the effect of dancing figures, as the soft wind gently stirred the leaves; the blackness of the shadows where the tall bushes stood irregularly on the lawn, and the denseness of the background against the strong glow of the light on the trees at the rear, composed a study, as Mary said, but it was lost on Martin. His mind was filled with less objective thoughts.

A fleet of summer clouds sailed across the moon, and made its light seem brighter when they had passed. Through the lattice of vines on the porch, the yellow glow of the candles shed a soft radiance on the place. There was a flitting of gay colors as the guests moved in and out, over the piazza or down on the lawn. Laughter and merry voices startled drowsy birds to twitterings of annoyance. Great blundering beetles and nocturnal moths fluttered in the glare and found retreat in the leafage. Here and there the outlines of a filmy gown, half-hidden in the shrubbery, suggested a *tête-à-tête*. And above the trees, on the roof of the church, shone the gilded cross of St. John the Evangelist.

Martin saw Helen come out on the porch, Graham close by her side. She seemed to be looking for somebody as she came down and made a circuit of the lawn.

Mary watched her as she came towards them. "She looks superb in that gown, doesn't she?"

"Miss Stafford appears well in any gown," Martin said. He rose as Helen came near.

He could not help hearing Graham say: "You promised to sing for me, you know."

"You must excuse me," Helen said. "I have changed my mind." She sat down by Mary, putting an arm about her. "Mr. Brook, I haven't had an opportunity to say how sorry I am that I was away when you called day before yesterday."

Graham drew an angry breath. "Good-night," he said.

"Must you go so soon?" Helen asked, blandly, rising. "Good-night."

She held out her hand. Graham bowed, without appearing to see it, and walked away.

"Mr. Brook," Helen said, sitting down again and taking Mary's impassive hand, "won't you draw that other bench nearer? This is a lovely little nook." Martin complied with her request.

"How cold your hands are, dear," she said to Mary.

"It is nothing," Mary hastened to say. "Would you mind if I were to slip away quietly? I'm not feeling quite well. The night air seems chill."

"Isn't there something I can do, dear?" Helen asked.

"No—no, thank you," Mary replied.

"Perhaps you ought not to sit here," Helen said, kissing her.

Mary got up, and Martin started to go with her.

"Don't come, please," she whispered, as she hurried away alone.

He stood in an attitude of uncertainty until she was gone, and turned towards Helen.

"I am troubled about Mary," he said.

"There is no occasion for anxiety, I think," Helen replied, with an unspoken invitation to Martin to sit beside her; but before he had seated himself, a servant came to her with a request from Mrs. Coulter. She took Martin's arm and went up the lawn to the house, wondering by what ordering of fate her aunt had sent for her just then, the question growing in her mind when Mrs. Coulter met them at the door only with some trivial excuse. An instant later, however, her aunt found opportunity to whisper: "Where is Mr. Graham?"

"He is gone," Helen said, icily, at the recollection of his conduct just before she had intentionally sought Martin and Mary on the lawn.

"He appeared to have been imbibing too freely," Mrs. Coulter said, in a low tone. "There was comment among the guests. I was afraid you might be annoyed."

"You are always thoughtful," Helen answered. Then, smilingly, to Martin: "Shall I sing for you?"

"Yes," he said, with a sudden thrill.

A chattering group of girls came running up.

"Oh, Miss Stafford, please play something for us," they urged.

Helen turned to Martin. "I will sing for you another time," she said. He bowed with a mingled feeling of regret and annoyance, as the company followed Helen into the parlor. But, by the glance she gave him, he realized that the barrier to his progress no longer existed.

Still, as the days went on, he did not declare his love. His silence was inexplicable to her, for she did not know him well enough to understand that the silence was a searching of his soul to determine that his emotion was truly the love he should feel for the woman he would marry.

Love had become as sacred a passion to him as the hope of salvation, and Helen was the object of his adoration; but he doubted the promptings of his heart, and struggled with those doubts as he had once wrestled with the problems of his religious awakening.

Now, as then, he desired a woman's estimate of the quality of his feelings; and once more he found that his attempts to speak to Mrs. Wright of his emotional affairs were never satisfactory. Besides, there seemed to be in this instance a peculiar reticence on her part which he could not understand. Whenever he tried to introduce the subject of his interest in Helen, Mrs. Wright evaded the subject, and ended by some irrelevant allusion to Mary.

The judge, however, appeared to desire his settlement in life, and had shown a very decided approval of Helen. She had won him through her professed sympathy with his studies. As a linguist, and especially because of the daring of her thought and her familiarity with the French and German literature of modern philosophy, she was ideally attractive to him. But she soon learned that Judge Northcote was impregnable to any feminine art that did not deal with some impersonal theme, and, with her adroit facility of mind, she had adapted herself to inevitable conditions.

But even the judge's open sanction of her did not convince Martin of the truth of his own feelings. He was compelled to speak to some one—to put his argument into words. It seemed to him, in the conflict of impulsive emotion and intellectual analysis, that it was a case for debate, and yet it was one to which no man — not even the judge — could be a party. Still, there was the warring of his own nature with the acquired habit of leaning on Judge Northcote's opinions.

And again, as in his religious struggle, he turned to Mary for advice.

"Mary," he said, as they were walking down from Elmhurst one evening, she on her way home and he accompanying her, but with a call at the rectory in his mind, "what do you think of Miss Stafford now?"

"I think her a very attractive woman."

"Attractive? Isn't there a more cordial word than that?"

"You know that I have met her but a few times," she said, gently. "Her life abroad appears to have changed her greatly. It is surely complimentary to say she is attractive."

"I don't want compliments," he replied, "but your sincere opinion."

"Why, I am sincere."

"Women are always so critical of other women," he said. "Why don't you like her?"

"But I do like her, Martin. At least, I do not dislike her. Why do you ask?"

"Because I think her the most charming, the most fascinating woman I have ever met," he declared.

"Neither of us has known very many charming women," Mary said.

Martin looked at her with an indignant frown.

"If you knew Miss Stafford better, perhaps you would have a higher opinion of my estimate."

"Do you like her so well, Martin?"

"I love her, Mary," he said, impulsively. "And I thought you would be glad to wish me success in winning her."

She made no reply until they had reached her home and Martin was turning to retrace his steps to the rectory. Then she laid her hand on his arm, restraining him a moment. "I do wish you success in all things, Martin," she said, calmly.

"Thank you," he said, taking both her hands in his. "With your good wishes, and little mother's, I feel confident. Good-night." He walked away with firm, proud steps.

"Good-night," she whispered, and went slowly up the path, with its shadowy border of shrubs.

Alone in her room, Mary locked the door, and dropped on her knees by her bed, sobbing in agony. She poured out the secret of her heart to the invisible mother, whose presence seemed to hold her in a pitying embrace. And yet, as is so often the case with those who call upon the dead for consolation, she felt that sense of immeasurable distance between them; the vastness of the silence; the suggestion of a terrifying complacency in superior wisdom gained on the wider plane of vision, and which appeared to her to mean a diminishing of the one-time human sympathy.

"Oh, dear mother," she moaned, "is it possible that you have outgrown your love for me? Does death mean an indifference to the suffering of your child? Can't you come to me as you were, and give me strength in sympathy? I love him so—must I give him up to her—to a cold, heartless woman, who does not love him for himself? You do not answer, and yet you see me, in my helplessness."

She lay exhausted, in dumb misery, for a time; when suddenly there came to her inner sense the words she had once tried to encourage Martin with: "God is love!" A spiritual calm drifted down upon her—the calm of unselfishness soothed her tired heart. She raised her head, as if with the passing of the burden and weight of grief.

"Am I just to her?" she asked. "She cannot be unworthy if he loves her—and if he loves her, I must give him up. God help me to forget!"

The time came at last when Martin was convinced of his love for Helen. He went first to the judge, in the library, and told him of the new interest in life.

"My dear boy," Mr. Northcote replied, "this is only the natural course of events. Love is a law, but let us be sure that we are obeying the law aright." He was silent a moment. "Yes," he declared oracularly, "you must win your spurs if you are to wear the guerdon. Begin with a woman's love. Be known as her champion. The assurance of a worthy woman's love is a safeguard and an inspiration."

"You are right," Martin said. "Helen will be an incentive, sir, even if you do draw so high a simile. You have given me a social rank, and although I may never become a great knight, still—"

"Yes, that is what you must become, a knight of the Established — the Conservative and Preservative. That work is before you, or I misread the signs of the times."

"Knights of the Established became Crusaders and—"

"No!" cried the judge. "That is absurd. Leave crusading to the unbalanced and fanatical. Be a man among the dignified rulers. There are great possibilities for you. Begin right and live right. It is the law of God and nature that we should not live alone. For myself—" He stopped and looked away, a light in his eyes Martin had never seen before. Turning once more and looking straight into Martin's face, he asked: "Are you sure she loves you?"

"I think so," Martin said.

"Is that all that you can say?" the judge questioned, earnestly. Then with deep feeling: "Be sure, my boy; be sure of it!"

The judge walked to his chair and sat down, his head drooped forward on his chest.

Martin waited. The judge remained lost in thought.

"I have your permission to ask Helen Stafford to be my wife, father?"

"Yes."

The summer sped rapidly. Helen's visit was protracted beyond the limits of her father's patience, and she announced the date of her home-going. There was now no more of the early coquetry—no more of

Graham—no more of the vacillating between the thought of winning the judge or winning the prospective heir. Her mind seemed to be centred on Martin, as his was fixed on her.

The evening before the day of her departure was passed at Elmhurst. Helen was convinced that she had won the judge to a full acceptance of her in his aspirations for Martin. Because of this, she had said good-bye to the judge with tender solicitude, and had kissed Mrs. Wright at parting. And yet, she had failed to assure herself that Martin was indeed the heir to Elmhurst. Her delicate inquiries, her naïve suggestions, had fallen on deaf ears, and there were moments when, in the uncertainty of her own purpose, she half questioned Martin's sincerity in his profession of a disinterested love. It was the name and social status of the Northcotes, rather than the fortune, which attracted her; and Martin was not a Northcote in fact.

But now she knew that the time had come when he would speak, and she shrank from the avowal of her intention; for he might, after all, become a Northcote. So, on their way from Elmhurst, that final night of her stay in Sandy Hill, she was halting between two opinions.

They approached the little rectory. They reached the gate. Martin laid his hand on the latch and held it firm. He barred her way. The words that came to his lips were not the ones he had planned to speak, but such as could come only from a man who is stirred by a passionate conviction.

"Helen," he said, "do you remember that first evening at the party, years ago, when you sang for Mr. Graham and turned away from me?"

Her heart gave a sudden leap. She flashed a look into his face. Was this, then, simply a trick? Had he been playing for petty revenge all these weeks? He—a nobody—a waif!

She made no reply, and he went on: "You thought me ignorant and awkward."

"You have enjoyed a long season of revenge," she interrupted, haughtily.

"I have enjoyed too brief a summer."

"Allow me to pass," she commanded.

"No, not until you have heard all I wish to say—all I must say."

She started a step forward, and tried to wrench his hand from the gate, but he held her away.

"You shall not enter this place until you have said the word that decides my fate. I am a tyrant for once."

Still she did not grasp his meaning.

"Helen," he whispered, "don't you understand me? I love you! I have loved you from the first!"

"You love me?" she said, drawing a quick breath. She realized his meaning in alluding to the past, but the first thrill of anger—of mortification—the hurt to her pride—still lingered. The transition in her intense emotion, from defence of self to selfish conquest, was too quick for even her facile mind. She turned her face from him. He put his arm around her with restraining force.

His positive touch offended her; but the assurance of success revived the instinct of coquetry in her. She had triumphed, and yet the dominant habit of her nature asserted itself. She had won him by deliberation, and now she hesitated, alarmed at the revelation of a love that was beyond her comprehension.

She reached out to open the gate. He caught her hand in his, with an arm still about her, and pressed her closer to him.

"Answer me!" he insisted. "Tell me you love me, darling! Tell me! Do you?"

"I think so," she said, half yielding, repeating, unconsciously, his own words to the judge.

"Tell me! Tell me now!"

"I cannot think now. You hurt me. Let me go!"

Chapter XIII

Martin lay awake that night, after his declaration of love to Helen, blaming himself for his crude love-making, for his delay in speaking and his final peremptory demand—indeed, for a hundred unpardonable blunders he could now recall. He justified her in refusing to be coerced into reply—in refusing to listen to a command. He argued, however, in self-defence, that he had not meant to speak in such a tone; but he confessed judgment on his stupidity. It appeared to him to be a greater stupidity than he had shown years ago. And yet, he pleaded with tormenting memory that he had spoken in love. Yes, now that he had jeopardized his cause by an uncouthness of manner, he was confident that he loved her, and that he must remove the wrong impression he had created regarding both motive and manners.

He could think of only one way to do this: he would call at the rectory in the morning and have a minute's talk with her before she left Sandy Hill.

Filled with this idea, he got up at the first streak of dawn, that he might not miss the opportunity; but it was hours to stage-time. He must wait until then. In his embarrassment he was afraid he might add to his mortification by appearing out of season at the rectory, even though he had so valid an excuse as Helen's early departure. The old-time feeling of sensitiveness came back to him. He reasoned that he could avert the hazard of a refusal to see him by getting to the rectory, as if by accident, just as the stage came in from the north; and by doing this he could walk with her to the inn without attracting special notice.

He rehearsed his coming scene a hundred times in thought; but there remained the dragging minutes until the stage should come. He paced the grounds and wandered into the fields, only to be seized with a sudden fear that the stage might arrive before the customary hour and carry her away before he could reach her side.

He walked hastily back to the house. Eph met him near the gate.

"Well, I swan!" Eph said, handing him a letter. "Didn't s'pose you was out o' bed yit. Here's somethin' the dominie's man fetched over just now. I was waitin' for ye to git up. Smells just like roses."

Martin's hand trembled as he took the letter. He recognized Helen's writing; but, more plainly still, the faint odor of roses that pervaded her belongings—the subtle fragrance of her presence, that was a part of her very self.

"Why didn't you bring this to me at once?" Martin demanded.

He went rapidly to his room, his heart beating fiercely with apprehension. He broke the dainty wafer with the utmost care, and held the missive, with averted eyes, a moment before he could summon courage to read it.

"MY DEAR MR. BROOK," [the message ran]—"I am so sorry not to see you once more before leaving, but I cannot expect you to give up the luxury of a morning nap just because the stage persists in keeping abominably early hours.

"You went away so quickly to-night (for I am writing this before I sleep) that I did not, in my carelessness, inquire concerning a possible call from you at our home. Cannot we hope for such a pleasure? I am sure my mother will be glad to know you; and I have already told you that my father has expressed a desire to hear more directly from Judge Northcote. I shall live in the pleasant anticipation of hearing that your professional duties require your presence in Albany very soon.

"Very sincerely your friend,
"HELEN STAFFORD."

Martin read the lines over and over. To his sensitive mind, she seemed plainly to prohibit a call this morning before she left Sandy Hill; but, beyond all question, she had forgiven his rudeness. And, in obedience to his interpretation of her meaning, with the precious letter still in his hand, he put temptation out of the way by going into the depths of the woods, off from the highway, where he could not hear the coach as it rattled by, lest it should drag him, against her will, to the rectory gate. Here, in the solitude, he studied every word, and read into the delicate prohibition of a present meeting the most encouraging expression of a hope—a hope that they would meet again—an invitation so direct that it left no chance for a doubt.

There was a sense of something lacking—a vacancy in life—when he returned home and took up the day's dull routine. Judge Northcote perceived this look in his face, and smiled.

"You will find it rather lonely now, I presume," he said.

"Yes," Martin admitted, frankly. "I was thinking that possibly there might be some business—some professional errand—you would like to have me do for you in Albany."

"No," the judge said, slowly, with a twinkle in his eyes. "I do not know of anything that claims my personal attention; but I should like to send a private letter to Colonel Stafford. Would you object to acting as my messenger?" The judge's white silk handkerchief fluttered for a moment in his fingers.

"If you wish it, sir," Martin said, smiling. "I am ready to go at any time."

That morning the judge wrote two letters—one, unsealed, introducing Martin Brook and commending him to the confidence of Colonel Stafford; and one, considerably longer, which he sealed before enfolding it in the open letter, which was held in form by a bit of thread.

"You will pardon me," the judge remarked, "for making this inner message a sealed communication?" He permitted himself the luxury of a smile. "The colonel *may* choose to make a verbal reply, but we must regard his feelings as a man accustomed to the secret methods of diplomatic correspondence."

And now, after a week of careful preparation, Martin is pacing the inn porch, impatiently awaiting the arrival of the coach. Enoch stands guard over the long carpet-bag with its leather-covered iron jaws and interlacing strap that clutches the final staple in its padlocked embrace.

"You are sure that everything is right, Enoch? Did you put in that last lot of scarfs?"

"Why, Marse Martin," Enoch said, reproachfully, "you think I let you go if 'twa'n't in hyar?"

"No—certainly not—certainly not." Martin drew his silver watch from the fob-pocket of his trousers and looked at the time of day. "The stage must have met with an accident—it's behind time."

"Yes, sah, I reckon it is mos' pow'ful slow," Enoch assented, as he turned his back on Martin and bent over the bag, rolling his eyes in silent laughter.

But here, on the very minute, came the coach, with Big Bill on the box—Big Bill, who in years gone by may have been burdened with another name, but now, just Big Bill, master-craftsman of the reins and whip; known to every urchin from Glens Falls to Troy as the model by which to shape the greatest of all earthly ambitions. To be as big as Bill—to handle the leathern lines like Bill—to own a yellow chest like Bill's, that always lay there on the floor of the driver's perch, with its mysterious contents, its bits of straps, its buckles, its lashes, its emergency kit of tools, not to speak of the rare artistic painting of an etherealized whip with a winding lash and a dream of a snapper that adorned the padlocked lid—in fact, to have the things that Bill was known to have, to see the places that Bill had seen, to listen to the deep, gruff voice of Bill, and hear him roar at the stable-boys, or tone his dust-worn throat in fit reply to a lady's word of salutation—all these, and infinitely more things that might be said of Bill, made him the envied hero of the road. It was high treason to assert that any other man could wheel a coach up to an inn porch or fling a mail-pouch down in better form than he.

Late? Never! Martin's watch may have been out of time, or Martin's eager nerves may have been playing false, but Bill was always right.

And Martin knew it as well as any one, when he caught the hand-rail of the coach and pulled himself up over the forward wheel to the seat beside the mighty Bill, and nodded with insuppressible pride to the little crowd about him—Martin, in his blue broadcloth coat with brass buttons and swelling skirt, his light, full trousers, his bell-crown beaver and his low shoes, his fob and watch—the watch whose workings we have dared to question.

Judge Northcote himself had honored the occasion by coming down and reaching the inn at the moment of the arrival of the coach—not an instant sooner—as Bill's fat forefinger described a graceful circle and reached his hat-brim in recognition of the judge's salutation.

But the stop was only for a moment—Sandy Hill was not a changing station. The horses, restless to be off, shook their heads impatiently. Bill drew the lines between his fingers, Martin lifted his hat to the judge, and the stage was off once more, while Enoch shouted: "Good luck, Marse Martin!"

The swaying coach, on its triple leather straps that served in lieu of springs, went dashing down the street; and yet it seemed to Martin that it was drawn by snails, so fast his heart outran the horses. Yet time will pass, even though an eager lover counts the minutes. And, once in Albany, after a night of disturbed rest, in the unwonted seclusion of his hotel, Martin's anxiety was not concerning time, but because of the momentous responsibility that was thrust upon him in the selection of his scarf. He had grown so accustomed to having Enoch decide these important matters for him, that now, at the critical moment, he regretted that he had not brought Enoch with him, as he sighed in despair and spread the contents of his long carpet-sack on the bed.

So, at last, after many testings, when he had decided on the broadcloth coat, with trousers to match, and the rich black silk neckerchief, that puffed in front and was held in place by a long gold-head pin, low shoes and silk stockings of the finest quality, he was pleased to see that his tall hat increased the effect of his height. Helen had once said that she admired tall men. But the attention he gave to his appearance was not from vanity; it was done in a spirit of regard for his distinguished host. He assured himself of this a score of times, as he turned before the mirror. He was the bearer of important "sealed instructions," from a gentleman to an eminent diplomat; and his office of confidence demanded the observance of every shade of decorum.

Thus, conscious of having fulfilled his external duties, he tried to quiet the beating of his heart, when, in the presence of Colonel Stafford, in the beautiful mansion near the Capitol, he handed out those letters of introduction, and saw them taken with all the dignity befitting the occasion.

That sealed message, whatever its purport really was, could not have been more efficacious in securing favor if it had been a literal evidence of Martin's succession to the estate of Elmhurst. At all events, it proved to be an open sesame to the colonel's heart and home.

"My dear sir," the colonel said, "there is only one regret to be expressed—the unfortunate illness of Mrs. Stafford deprives her of the pleasure of performing the duties of hostess. But I am happy to say that my daughter is at home."

"Miss Stafford is—is well, I trust," Martin said.

"Yes, and she will be delighted to see some one from Sandy Hill." The colonel rang. "And the dear judge? How is my old friend?"

"The judge is enjoying his usual good health, I am glad to say."

A servant entered. Colonel Stafford requested the presence of Miss Stafford. Martin listened to the words, in a state of nervous unreality. He counted his heart-beats, until that moment when, more bewilderingly charming, more lovable than ever before, he saw her standing there in the room, and heard her voice uttering words of welcome, approving of the colonel's cordial assurance that he must be their guest while he remained in town.

The hours no longer dragged. And yet, as the days went on—for the colonel insisted on his remaining long enough to meet the Governor and other notable men—Martin became conscious of an atmosphere of reserve in Helen which was puzzling and indefinable. An intangible barrier seemed to be shaping itself between them. Because of this vague dread, it was not until the third evening of his stay that he found the courage to reavow his love. Then, sustained by a consciousness of Colonel Stafford's approval of him, he spoke to her.

"Helen," he said, "you know why I am here. I love you, and I ask you to become my wife."

He was amazed at his own calmness and her placidity. In the dimly lighted parlor of this fine home his words sounded cold, conventional, formal. He seemed to be arguing a case that, while justified by reason, needed argument, and she answered him with equal coolness; but, as he desired she should, she promised to become his wife.

In spite of his success, he kept on questioning the reality of it all. Where were his passion and his agony of fear? Why had the accomplished fact of his acceptance by the woman he loved assumed this aspect of the commonplace?

He shook himself free from the chilling thought, and stood before her, as she sat in unemotional quiet.

"Helen, *do* you love me?"

"Love you, Martin?" she answered, opening and closing the ivory leaves of her fan. "Certainly I do. Haven't I told you so?"

He grew impulsive. "Tell me once more. It seems so unreal—so incredible. Yes, you have promised to be my wife; but when? When will you marry me?" He held his arms towards her. "Tell me, darling!"

"Some day, Martin," she said, ignoring his gesture.

"Some day?" he cried, passionately. "You gave me hope—why need we defer that hope? Let me carry back an assurance of the time—a definite hope!"

"There are so many things to be considered," she replied. "You should be content with the promise." She smiled. He came closer to her.

"Oh, Helen—darling!" he said, taking both her hands. "I am willing to wait; but there is no need of this delay." He tried to draw her to him, but she remained impassive.

"You forget my mother's illness," she said. "Let us offer that as excuse."

"Excuse?" he questioned, dropping her hands. "What do you mean?"

"No, not excuse," she said, rising, with a smile that brought him to her again. "Call it our reason."

"I will call nothing in reason but the fulfilment of your promise."

He took her in his arms and kissed her, but she made no response.

The memory of that kiss bore him along through the days that followed his return home, placid days, filled with a sense of gratitude to God and all his earthly friends for the blessings that were being showered upon him. Letters from Helen, and his daily record of his love for her, sustained him; but to every urging he could devise there came some plausible argument for delay.

The establishment of his heirship, which was prolonged by Judge Northcote's habit of deliberation in business affairs, and because he wished to make an actual transfer of a portion of the estate to insure Martin's independence, remained in abeyance. Conscious of the pleasure the judge and Mrs. Wright took in their labor of love, in confirming his relation to them, and ruled by his innate delicacy towards his patron, Martin made no allusion to the subject. In the confidence of his love for Helen, he did not associate the fact of her reserve with this conservative action by the judge. But in spite of this impatience on Martin's part for a decisive word from Helen, there was a happy group at Elmhurst; and the happiest heart in all the place beat under the black skin of old Enoch.

The matter-of-fact Eph contemplated the change in Martin's social prospects with deep interest, but with none of the enthusiasm shown by Enoch.

"It's jest 's I sed it'd be," Eph remarked. "I see how things was comin' out first time I see the little chap layin' out there in the barn. All he needed then was age, an' that comes natchul to him. I'll have to practise callin' him Mister, I 'spose."

"Marse Martin is gettin' whar he belongs," Enoch affirmed, wisely. "De head ob dis yeah great house gotter hab brains, an' dat's what Marse Martin's got. Brains an' heart—dat's what Marse Martin's got. He knows de taste ob de bestest wines, an' he got de real qual'ty ways wid his garments. Yis, sah, dat's what he is—jes' lak de ole Virginia gem'men, sah."

Enoch knew. He was monarch of the realm above stairs, ruling the wardrobes, and in the wine-cellar he was supreme. It was always this coat and that bottle, when Enoch passed the word. In the village, too, he was known as well as any member of the household. There was only one man in Sandy Hill who disliked Enoch, and that was Sidney Graham, who had for years entertained a bitter feeling of enmity for both the young master and the man; a feeling that had increased when Martin revealed the authorship of the articles in the *Sentinel* to Graham's undoing, and was now developed into positive animosity at the rumor of Martin's social preferment. Graham's attitude towards the negro was that of reflected animosity because of Martin's open friendship for Enoch.

Graham's expulsion from the office by the judge added still another to the list of those he already hated. He secretly hoped the time would come when he could take revenge on Northcote as well as on Martin. He knew that Martin, despite the cultivated habit of repression, was, at heart, impulsive and emotional. He had never forgotten nor forgiven that involuntary bath in the Hudson, and had brooded over the humiliation of Helen Stafford's dismissal of him and the rumor that his rival was the accepted suitor.

He refused to believe the report, until he had ventured, without invitation, to call on her, and had been informed that Miss Stafford was "not at home," and then he tried to forget his chagrin amid the diversions of New York.

Idling the time away, in a moody spirit, he came unexpectedly on a college chum—Lyndon Curtis, son of a Virginia planter; a generous, indolent fellow of the better sort; a tall, graceful, dark-eyed young man; whose clothing, well-cared-for black hair and mustache — something rarely seen on Northern men —betokened the gentleman of leisure, and whose cordial manner showed the warmth of a pleasure-loving nature.

"By all the powers," Curtis said, as they shook hands, "I'm glad to see you! You are just in time to go with me to the sea-shore."

"Let me improve on that suggestion," Graham replied. "Let's go up north and have a few days' hunting and fishing."

"I think we had better try the shore," Curtis said, hesitatingly.

"You can always have the sea-shore," Graham urged, "but not always the pleasures of the northern woods. Come up with me and have a week in the hills."

"Well, that is an inducement," Curtis admitted. "I was thinking of the inconvenience it might be to your mother, but—"

"Nonsense, my dear boy. I don't live at home. I have bachelor apartments at the inn. They are at your service—and you'll find them comfortable."

Within the week, he proved the truth of this assertion.

The cool quiet of the place, after the days of heat in the city, was delightful to him, as he and Graham sat on the inn porch.

"Why, man, this is ideal!" he said.

"Well, yes—as a retreat. If you neglect that bottle, my boy, I'll cut you dead. Here's to the pranks at Union!"

"'If Nott, why not?'" Curtis sang, clinking glasses in a merry revival of those scenes. "Do you remember the night you put the skeleton in little Judson's bed?"

"Do you remember the time you plastered him with the custard-pie, and made him swear he liked it?" Graham returned.

They were making the quiet village resound with laughter when Judge Northcote came in sight. He heard the voices on the inn porch and glanced up; but, seeing Graham, made no sign of recognition, as he went into the post-office.

"Who is that gentleman?" Curtis inquired, with unusual interest.

"Judge Northcote," Graham said, indifferently. "Do you remember—"

Suddenly Curtis leaned over the porch rail and looked intently at a negro who was passing. Graham was filling the glasses and did not notice his friend's movement.

"How in the deuce did he get here?" Curtis exclaimed.

"Who?" said Graham.

"Why, old Enoch."

For a moment Graham did not comprehend the situation.

"Look out," he said; "you'll upset your glass."

"Yes," said Curtis, "that's old Enoch for sure."

Instantly the thought flashed through Graham's mind: Curtis, a Southerner, recognized Enoch, who was Martin Brook's friend. He got up and stood by the railing, while Enoch went on to the *Sentinel* office; unlocked the door and passed into the hall.

Graham turned around and took up his glass, spilling some of the wine. "Where did you ever see the old darky before?" He sipped at the glass, watching Curtis with a look of cunning in his small eyes.

"Where? Why, he was my father's body-servant. I was brought up with him. I'd know him anywhere."

"A runaway nigger, eh?" Graham said, showing his teeth in silent laughter.

"Yes, that's what he is; but after my father's death I had too much on my hands to keep up the hunt for him. He was always a bother—always a troublesome boy—full of notions."

"He ran away five or six years ago?"

"Yes, maybe longer."

Enoch reappeared on the street, with a book under his arm. He came across to the post-office. Curtis rose as if to speak to him, but Graham quietly pushed him back into his chair.

"Get a good look at him," he whispered, "but don't speak to him, or let him see you. I'll tell you why later on. Pull your hat down over your face." Curtis did so, wondering at Graham's caution.

"Good-evening, Enoch," Graham called out.

"Ebenin', Marse Graham," Enoch said, hat in hand.

"There's not the slightest doubt of it," Curtis asserted, after Enoch had gone on. "But pshaw! He isn't worth bothering about." Then, thoughtfully: "Except on principle."

"Precisely so," said Graham, quickly. "Come upstairs to my room, and I'll tell you about it. He didn't recognize you, and we shall have no trouble in finding him when you want him."

Chapter XIV

GRAHAM led the way to his rooms. He called for wine and appeared to be at ease, but he was not pleased at the young planter's attitude. His mind ran hurriedly over a hundred plans. Here was the longed-for opportunity, if he could but devise a way to compass it. The mere surrender of the man by Northcote would put an end to the revenge he was seeking. Something must be done to wring that upstart Martin's heart—to make him suffer.

"I tell you, Curtis," Graham insisted, "he is worth bothering about. As you say, it is a question of principle. Why, the gentleman this nigger has imposed upon would be seriously offended if he were to learn that you had permitted him to remain an abettor of crime."

"Yes? Yes, it would be a crime if this gentleman were trying to rob me. But, upon my word, Graham, it's such an inconvenience to me over a small matter—the man isn't worth the bother."

"He's worth just what the principle involved is worth."

"That's true," Curtis agreed. "Do you know how he manages to live?"

"He is the body-servant to a gentleman."

"What!" cried Curtis. "Why, that is an insult to my father's memory!"

"Yes, but not an intentional one. Judge Northcote is a lawyer, and he—"

"Judge Northcote? That distinguished looking man who passed us to-night as we sat on the inn piazza?"

"Yes."

"Why, he has the manner of a Virginian. He would not do a dishonorable act."

"He is of Virginia stock. His mother was a Fairfield; he inherited slaves, and then set them free; he knows the fine distinctions and—"

"By Jove, you are right! I owe him the courtesy of a statement. Where can we find him?" Curtis said, starting up, impetuously.

Graham smiled. "You seem in haste. Don't get excited, dear boy. In the morning we can go to his house."

"To his office, not his house," Curtis corrected him. "This is a business matter. You say he is a lawyer; he has an office, of course."

"Yes, but I am—that is, I know the better way is to go to his house."

Something in Graham's tone made Curtis turn on him.

"Why do *you* take such an interest in this affair?"

"Oh," Graham said, shiftily, "why, the fact is, I have received a good many courtesies at the hands of the judge myself, and I think it only proper for me to relieve him of the gossip that the village people indulge in at his expense. I presume every one suspects that the nigger is a runaway, and that is sufficient to keep the tongues wagging in a little place like this."

"If that is so, of course Mr. Northcote must be aware of the talk," Curtis said, puzzled.

"No. Let us not do him that injustice," Graham said, pleased at his own adroitness. "The people here are held aloof from intimacy with him by his haughty manner. No one would dare to speak to him about his domestic affairs. That is exactly what has kept me silent." He played with his glass a moment.

"I beg your pardon," Curtis said, indifferently. "I mean no offence; but I'm tired of this bother. Let's change the subject."

He filled his glass.

"I still think it ought not to be dropped," Graham remarked, in a judicial tone. "Just leave it to me, if you don't want to be bothered."

"Very well, my dear boy, if you are seeking activity," Curtis replied, waving his hand in dismissal of the theme as he walked to the window.

"As you intimated," Graham said, in an injured tone, "it isn't any of my business, but I—"

"No, no, no," Curtis protested, facing him. "My dear fellow, I'm a thousand times obliged to you, and I simply meant— You're nearest the bell-cord. May I trouble you to jerk it? Thanks!" as Graham rose and rang the bell. "You are so uncomfortably energetic." Curtis flung himself into a chair.

"As a lawyer and a friend to both the judge and yourself," Graham said, standing by the mantel, "I advise the writing of a letter to your overseer to bring the original proof of the runaway. There was the usual legal order for his arrest, I presume?"

"Yes. My overseer, Griffin, attended to it, I fancy," said Curtis, with a yawn.

"He can secure new papers, at all events, in case of there being none," Graham mused. "Then, with them in hand, there can be no defence here—that is, if the judge is disposed to show legal fight."

"A legal fight?" Curtis said. "Why, he has no case."

A servant entered.

"Another bottle," Graham said to him, "and bring us writing-paper, pens, and ink."

He walked to the window, and thoughtfully puffed at his cigar, saying nothing until the things were brought. Then he wrote a letter to the overseer, while Curtis stood idly by the table, watching him. It was an order to come to Sandy Hill and claim the runaway, Enoch. He laid the document in front of Curtis, who merely glanced at it and dashed in his signature. To the young Southerner the act was purely a formality.

But before Graham slept that night, he had despatched his own servant with the letter, telling him to spare neither money nor horses to catch the boat at Albany, and go to Virginia by the quickest route, returning with Griffin at once. In the morning, he so interested Curtis with the preparations for the hunting-trip that Northcote and Enoch were not even mentioned by the young planter.

Pleasantly located in the woods, in a pioneer's cabin, Graham counted off the days that must elapse before the overseer could reach Sandy Hill. He figured that, if nothing happened to prevent, the man should arrive within a month with the papers. So he timed their stay, and returned to Sandy Hill on the very day that Griffin reached there.

The overseer was anxious to get to business at once, but Curtis was indifferent. "Oh, don't bother me now," he said. "I'm stiff with the ride over the rough roads. I'll rest a bit. There's no hurry."

"That's right," Graham interposed. "This is a matter I will see to—to-morrow, perhaps, or next day. No haste, you know." And he induced Curtis to go to his rooms for a few hours' rest. But he told the overseer, in his own way, of the case.

"This Northcote is an abolitionist," he said. "You'll have a fight, maybe. Have your irons ready. Mr. Curtis will be rested by evening, and we will go up to the house. You follow us, with an officer, and watch my movements."

Graham procured the needed local help for the carrying out of his designs. He hired a horse and cart, with orders to his servant to bring them into the public street in front of the inn that evening. He set the village agog with vague hints of something that was about to happen at Elmhurst.

After supper, while Curtis was idling on the inn porch, Graham came to him in a careless way. "Come, old man, let's take a stroll."

"Oh, let me alone," Curtis protested. "It's comfortable here."

The street before the inn was filling with a silent, curious, expectant crowd.

Graham thrust his arm in Curtis's, and guided him, still protesting, towards Elmhurst. In front of the mansion he paused.

"This is Elmhurst—Judge Northcote's place. By-the-way, suppose we go in and speak to him," Graham said, with assumed nonchalance.

"No," replied Curtis, "that would be an intrusion."

"You don't understand our customs, Mr. Curtis. This is no intrusion. You go as my guest, to pay honor to a distinguished citizen. If you happen to find your property—"

"Pardon me," said Curtis, resentfully, perceiving Graham's purpose in asking him to walk. "That's not the view I take of it. It's a point of common courtesy I'm considering. I shall not go where I am uninvited. Besides, when I do meet this gentleman, I shall tell him at once my business with him, and I shall seek him professionally at his office."

"And ruin your case? The judge might question your identity."

Curtis stood still in amazement. "Question my identity? Aren't you my sponsor?"

"Certainly, certainly," Graham hastily exclaimed.

"But Northcote is so deuced impulsive. He would not hesitate to fly at his best friend if he became angry."

"A very strange man, I must say," Curtis replied. "I shall study him with interest, when I do meet him."

"That's it," Graham said, eagerly. "Observe him. I'll give you a hint how to meet him. Once you get on his blind side, he's the most charming of men. Come in now. Let me lead up to the pet theme of his library. It's worth seeing. You'll enjoy that. And I want to ask him some questions on property rights."

Curtis reluctantly consented, his misgivings about these "customs of the North" yielding to his sense of courtesy to his host.

As they passed through the gates and up the winding walk, Graham glanced back to be sure that no mistake was possible with the overseer and his assistant. He let Curtis advance, while he stopped a moment and signalled to the men. "Stand where you can see the house, and watch for me," he whispered. "When I wave my handkerchief, come up quickly. Now keep out of sight." The men dropped down by the wall. Graham caught up with Curtis.

"Isn't this superb!" he exclaimed. "This view of the river is unsurpassed. And the mansion. Doesn't it remind you of home?"

"A most beautiful spot. Yes, it is a Southern home, surely," Curtis said, admiringly.

"Judge Northcote," Graham said, as he approached the steps, hat in hand, coolly assuming the manner of an accustomed visitor to the place, "I have taken the liberty to bring my friend, Mr. Lyndon Curtis, to view the scene from your grounds. Mr. Curtis, our distinguished citizen, Judge Northcote."

"You are welcome," said the judge, meeting the stranger at the foot of the steps, but politely unconscious of Graham. "And I am confident I cannot be mistaken in saying you are from the South?"

"My home is in Virginia," Curtis replied, "but I am of the impression that I am still at home."

"You do me honor, and you also honor the memory of my parents. My mother was a Fairfield."

"So Mr. Graham was saying," Curtis replied, warmly. "But I should have recognized the Southern spirit in the mansion."

"I have brought Mr. Curtis here, judge," Graham interposed, "to prove that we can sustain our claim to the best-appointed library in this county. I was discussing the subject of Northern culture with him, and named you as our most notable example. I trust Martin is at home?"

"He is in the library," the judge said, coldly. "He was writing when I came out. These sunsets ought not to be missed," turning to Curtis with a marked change of tone, "and if you will favor me by taking a glass of wine here, we can enjoy the scene and examine the library at our leisure."

"Our time is limited, judge," Graham interposed.

This out-door stage-setting was too large for his purpose—the chances for effect were diminished. Besides, Martin was not present. The library was the place. He must group his people. The judge had unconsciously given him a cue—the library was the very place. He hastened to say: "If you will pardon us, a glance at the books, and then an evening view from the porch."

"As you please, gentlemen." The judge looked in puzzled annoyance at Graham, but bowed his assent, leading the way inside.

Graham went in last, turning to assure himself that the view was not obstructed from the library window.

Chapter XV

"MARTIN," said the judge as he entered the library, "Mr. Curtis, a gentleman from the old State. Mr. Curtis, Martin Brook, who is soon to bear my name by adoption. Mr. Curtis will join us in a glass of the Madeira here." He went to the bell, without alluding to Graham.

"I am glad to know you," Martin said, shaking Curtis's hand, but simply bowing to Graham. "Judge Northcote has told me so much of your State that I feel almost like a Virginian."

"You have a competent instructor, I am sure," Curtis replied, unable to conceal his uneasiness. "I wish first to say that I owe both yourself and the judge an apology for coming here, as I do, apparently a guest—"

"Apparently?" Graham interrupted, with a nervous laugh.

"Yes," said Curtis, positively. "There is an explanation to make. I am intruding on your hospitality. My real motive in coming here—"

The judge intercepted Enoch at the door, who came in response to the bell, and gave a whispered order about the old Madeira which made the negro's face glow with importance. He now joined the group in time to overhear Curtis's words.

"Intruding, my dear sir? A gentleman from Virginia can never be an intruder here. Martin, will you please throw back those curtains and let in a little more light? Thank you," as Martin went to a window, Graham following him.

"You are recently arrived here from your home?" the judge asked.

"Yes. Mr. Graham and I were at Union College, and we met by chance down in New York about a month ago and renewed our acquaintance. I came up here for a hunting-trip with him, and we have just returned from the woods to-day. This is a most delightful country, and I add the pleasure of this call to my experiences."

"Thank you. We flatter ourselves that we have some rare books. If it were lighter—" He faced towards the windows. The sun was nearing the top of the hills. He was surprised to see Graham waving a handkerchief to some one evidently in the yard below.

"Let us have the candles, Martin," the judge suggested. "It is really too dark for us to see."

"Not to-night, Judge Northcote, if you will pardon me," Curtis said. "I overheard Mr. Graham say his time was limited. I wish to speak to you on a matter of business."

"Business?" the judge said, surprised. "But, that must not prevent you from seeing my books. Come at any hour to suit your convenience. My time and house are yours while you remain in Sandy Hill. It is not often that I am honored with a guest from dear old Virginia, and when—"

A crash of shattered glass cut short his speech.

Enoch had entered the room while the judge was speaking, bringing a tray on which were glasses and a decanter of the rare old Madeira which was the pride of Elmhurst. These now lay in ruins on the floor, and Enoch was standing in the doorway, stiff with fear, his jaw dropped, his eyes staring whitely at the stranger, gasping:

"Marse Lyndon!"

Curtis took a step forward, with an involuntary show of relief, his head lifted in affirmative gesture. Judge Northcote looked questioningly from the young man to Enoch.

Martin, who had not heard Enoch's exclamation, started towards the servant with a low word of sympathy. He did not comprehend Enoch's attitude of fear.

But Graham intercepted him, and, pushing Enoch into the room, stationed himself in the doorway.

"By your leave," he said, mockingly.

"Pardon me," Martin responded, gazing at him in surprise. "This is a trifling accident. Enoch, another service." He turned once more to the servant, and saw that Enoch was kneeling on the floor, with hands held up appealingly to Mr. Curtis, who was advancing towards the judge.

"I see," said Curtis, "that the explanation I was attempting to make is unnecessary now. How long has this negro been with you?"

The judge did not reply, and Martin answered for him: "Enoch has been in our family many years."

"Possibly five years?" Curtis asked.

"Fully that long," Martin said, nettled at the implication of awkward service. "Pray do not judge of him by this mishap. As the judge was saying, we must have more light here." He went to the window.

The judge, however, perceived another meaning in the question, and at the same time he saw that Martin did not grasp the situation.

"Mr. Curtis," Northcote said, "may I request you to make your business known?"

His tone made Martin turn about quickly.

"My business, sir, is to tell Judge Northcote he is harboring one of my runaway slaves."

"*Your* slave!" Martin said, going to Enoch.

"And you came here, Mr. Curtis," the judge went on, unheeding the interruption, "with that intention, yet professing to wish to see my library?"

"My coming here to-night was somewhat unpremeditated, but this is now my business."

A suspicion of Curtis's identity flashed through the judge's mind. Was he an impostor? Was he merely a tool in the hands of Graham?

"Unpremeditated? Do I understand you, Mr. Curtis, to say unpremeditated?"

"Yes, sir," Curtis replied, resenting the judge's manner, but trying to preserve his temper. "Circumstances prevented my speaking sooner."

"Ah," said the judge. "Circumstances in the person of Mr. Graham? I begin to understand why that man, who is not permitted to visit me at my office, should presume to call at my house."

Curtis looked at Graham. He recalled his host's remark about going to the office, yet instinctively replied:

"I am Mr. Graham's guest." Then, suggestively, "But I contend that I have also the right to come here, since you are keeping this negro—"

"You learned of this alleged fugitive through him?" the judge persisted.

"Alleged fugitive? Do you imply that—"

"Pardon me, I imply nothing. I prefer the direct form of speech. You have come to my house in a somewhat equivocal character. Perhaps you will favor me with a fuller explanation." The snuff-box was in his hand—he tapped it vigorously.

"The explanation is due from you, Mr. Northcote," said Curtis. "Why did you not ascertain who this man was?"

Martin confronted Curtis. "How do we know that you are his master?"

Curtis grew pale with anger. "Hasn't he acknowledged me?"

Martin stepped back perplexed, and looked at Enoch. "Acknowledged you?"

Judge Northcote dropped his box into his pocket and walked up to the negro with a scowling face.

"Enoch, who is this man?"

"Young Marse Lyndon, sah."

"Your master?"

"Yes, Marse No'thcote."

The judge again took out his snuff-box, tapped it hard, and held the pinch poised in the air as he paced thoughtfully away to the farther side of the room.

Graham smiled at this unusual display of agitation, and beckoned to some one in the corridor.

"I received the information of Enoch's whereabouts," Curtis said, with subdued passion, "in a most friendly spirit. I told Graham I cared nothing for the negro. I was willing to give him his freedom. But you have seen fit to insult me."

"No," said the judge, facing towards Curtis across the room, "this is not a personal matter, sir; it is more to me than you can understand."

Graham laughed aloud.

"Pardon me," Curtis replied, haughtily. "You questioned my motive, and this young man has done worse. Now, I shall not recede from my rights. I demand the surrender of my property."

"Property?" Martin cried, contemptuously.

The judge came forward. "Mr. Curtis, will you dispose of this man—will you sell him to me?"

"Not for all your estate," he replied, his head lifted defiantly. "I shall demand him in the name of the law."

"You will find that a difficult demand," Martin asserted.

"You are insolent," Curtis retorted. He turned from Martin to the judge. "I beg you to consider me, sir, for these few minutes, not as a guest. This interview has taken on another aspect. However I may have entered your house, I am now here purely on a question of business. You are guilty of harboring a runaway. You are a violator of the law, and I shall regard you in that light. I assumed at first that you did this innocently, but I do not believe that you are ignorant of the law. We have a name for men who interfere with our rights. We call them abolitionists!"

The judge's face grew ashen.

"Sir," he said, "it is scarcely necessary for me to say that I did not know this man was a fugitive."

"It was your duty to inquire," Curtis responded.

"I am not prepared to receive such a remark from you. While you are under my roof, you are my guest, in spite of your disclaimer, but I am sorry that you informed me you are a Virginian."

The color flooded into Curtis's face. A Virginian? Was he acting like one?

"I owe you an apology, Judge Northcote," he said, "and you, sir," looking at Martin. "This is a very unfortunate affair. I regret it exceedingly and am willing to—"

"The law is clear, Curtis," Graham called, loudly, from the doorway. "You can't change that fact. If you want to let this nigger go, you must take him back to your own State first. The law prohibits the sale of a slave in this State. And if you give him away here, you condone their action."

"I am able to judge of that for myself, Mr. Graham," Curtis replied.

"You're not the man I took you to be, Curtis," Graham insisted, "if you endure the insults of this young fellow, who has kept this slave here all these years, knowing him to be a runaway."

"I did not know he was a fugitive," the judge repeated.

"Well," said Graham, hotly, "I'll bet your hopeful son did."

"It is false," the judge declared. "Your word is not unimpeachable." He turned to Martin, who offered no reply.

Graham looked keenly at them. He saw that a chance shot had struck a vulnerable spot, and burst into a mocking laugh.

"Martin," said the judge, "am I mistaken in you?"

Martin fixed his eyes on the judge's.

"I knew from the first that Enoch was a fugitive," he said, firmly.

He saw the lines deepen in his benefactor's face—the man seemed to age in a moment.

"Ah," said Graham, "now we are getting at the facts. Curtis, remember that you are entitled to compensation for the nigger's services."

"I will compensate you," Martin said, withdrawing his eyes from the judge.

Northcote slowly walked up and down the room, with his handkerchief in his hand.

"Compensate me?" Curtis said, with a curl of the lip. "Do you imagine I would take money in a case of this kind?"

"What else can I think of a man who deals in human flesh and blood?"

Curtis turned on Martin with blazing eyes. "So *you* are the one?" he exclaimed. "Graham, I leave this to you—and wash my hands of the matter entirely. You are right. Take the slave."

He started impulsively towards the door.

"Wait a moment," the judge said. "I will not let you go away with a wrong impression. The circumstances—"

"The circumstances, Judge Northcote, are very plain. You can see for yourself that this negro belongs to me, and I doubt if you will dispute my right to claim my property, now that I have found him. I don't think Mr. Graham—"

"Please leave his name out of the conversation. You demand this man as your slave?"

"I certainly do."

"Of course we do," insisted Graham. "Any other action would overturn the laws of the country. A runaway nigger can be taken wherever he is found, and he must be, too, or property rights are not worth a rush. The laws must be upheld. If you go home, Curtis, leaving this nigger to tell his story, the abolitionists won't leave a chattel on your plantation; and you have seen enough right here, in the first family of a Northern town, to know what that means."

"You seem to like this thing better than I do, Graham," Curtis said. "I leave it to you."

Without a word to Martin, he bowed to the judge and went out, walking rapidly through the gathering crowd on the street, straight to the inn.

Graham waved his hand in the corridor and then came forward, holding a legal document in his hand.

"Judge Northcote, here is the court's order. Do you question the legality of the court?"

But the judge ignored him. Graham grew angry.

Martin stepped between Graham and Enoch. "I question it! I shall not let you take him," Martin said.

"You won't, eh?" sneered Graham. "How can you help it?"

"I'll pitch you, neck and heels, out of the window!"

"Stop, Martin," said the judge. "This is no place for brawls."

"No," cried Graham, "it's the place where they harbor runaway niggers and street brats."

Martin sprang at Graham, but the judge caught him and held him back.

"Leave this house, sir!" the judge commanded Graham.

"Oh no," said Graham. "Not quite yet. The work isn't finished."

Two men stood in the doorway. "There he is," Graham said, nodding towards Enoch, who cowered on the floor. "Put the irons on him."

The men advanced. In an instant Enoch was on his feet, standing at bay. He was no longer the abject slave, but an animal fighting for life. He seized a chair and swung it before him. The men retreated.

Enoch, watching his opportunity, dropped the chair and sprang for the door. The overseer darted at his back and tripped him. Enoch fell heavily, striking against the door-casing, and lay, half-stunned, with a gash in his forehead.

"Here, give me those irons!" Graham ordered.

The clink of metal sounded in the darkening room like the teeth of an angry wolf.

"Judge Northcote," Martin cried, his face pale, his hand held out in appeal, "do you permit this outrage?"

"It is the law," the judge said, dropping into a chair, his head resting on his palm.

"The law!" Martin repeated, scornfully, with head erect and arm extended. "The law! There is a higher law—the law of God! Think! This man once saved my life!"

"Impossible," the judge said, firmly, motioning to end the scene.

"Come," said Griffin, giving Enoch a push with his foot. "Get up."

"Stop!" Martin commanded. His tone changed to pleading. "Judge, I will pay the price, if—"

"Yes," said Graham, "you'll pay the price of harboring a runaway nigger," as he helped the men drag Enoch along the floor. Martin interposed, bracing himself with arms outstretched across the door.

The judge stood up, pointing a finger at Enoch. "Let them pass. No one man is superior to the law."

Martin folded his arms, still standing in the doorway.

"The time will come when every just man will say this law is an abomination," he declared.

"Then let us wait until that time comes," the judge replied, turning his back on them and walking slowly away, his head bowed, his hands behind his back.

Enoch rose to his knees, shook the men from him, and lifted his fettered hands.

Once more he was a slave.

"Marse No'thcote," Enoch said, "I's tried to do de bes' I could. I knowed I wus a runaway nigger, but I had to lie, sah, an' you made me feel I wus a man. I wants to thank you, sah, an' Mis' Ma'get—'deed I do. You can't help me now—no one can't—'cept jes' one way. Please, Marse No'thcote, ask Marse Graham tak de irons off'n me, sah. I's a proud ole nigger. I won't make no break—I won't do no ha'm—but I jes' hates to go frew de village lak I's done sumpin' to you. I hain't stole. I hain't hurted no one. Please tak 'em off, Marse No'thcote."

The judge made no reply. He was lost in the shadows of the drapery of the window.

Martin, the tears streaming down his cheeks, turned to Graham. "I pledge you my word he will go quietly. Will you take the irons off?"

But Graham, without looking at him, said to the men: "He's a sly one. He's liable to kill you and break away. Take him along."

They hustled Enoch out of the room and down the corridor.

The house servants, aroused by the unusual disturbance, were in the hall. The stable-boys and outdoor men came hurrying up on the walks, and stood gaping at the open entrance, from which came the sound of voices and the shuffling of feet.

A crowd of village folk was collecting in the street. Boys were running, shouting to those behind them as they ran. Men were walking fast, talking excitedly. Something was happening at the great house. Some were saying that Enoch had murdered the judge. Rumors that no one could locate or confirm were whirling through the air.

Meanwhile, in the upper corridor, at the head of the great stairway, Enoch was holding his captors back. Mrs. Wright was hastening towards him, her face pale, her hands held out. Martin could see her in clear outline, framed by the west window of the hall, through which the red light of the sunset was streaming. He recalled her attitude when she first received him at Elmhurst.

"What is the trouble?" she cried.

"Oh, nothing you need bother about," Graham said. "Go on!" he ordered.

Enoch brushed him aside with one blow of his ironed hands. Graham lunged forward and caught at the bannisters, making them creak and tremble. He uttered an oath, and bounded up the steps.

Enoch knelt before Mrs. Wright. "'Tain't nuffin', Mis' Wright. Dey's found ole Enoch. Thank you for all you done."

"Sir," said Mrs. Wright to Graham, "do you dare to take this man out of our house?"

Graham paid no attention to her.

"Martin!" Mrs. Wright cried, but Martin shook his head.

She ran to the library. "George! Will no one answer me? What does this mean?"

"Go to your room, Margaret," the judge said. He had come out of the library now and was watching the men.

"I will not go to my room! They are killing Enoch!" She grasped her brother's arm and pulled him to the stairs. "See, they are taking him away—he's hurt—bleeding—"

She reached the head of the stairs, still urging the judge along.

Martin, his face flushed with the exertion, was supporting Enoch as he went stumblingly down the stairs.

The chains on the negro's ankles clattered on every step.

"Martin!" the judge called from the top of the stairway, pushing Mrs. Wright back and leaning forward, one hand grasping the railing.

But Martin did not heed him, for he was still clinging to Enoch, while the men roughly pushed their prisoner along the hall, through the group of terrified servants, and out on to the portico.

The judge ran down the stairs, followed by Mrs. Wright, who was wringing her hands and crying. Northcote reached the doorway as the men dragged Enoch down the stone steps.

Eph Larrabee came running up, a dog barking at his heels.

The dog leaped fiercely on the overseer, who grabbed him and threw him violently on the sharp edge of the lower step. The animal gave a yelp—the servants shrieked—the crowd yelled.

"What on earth—" Eph cried.

"They're going to take Enoch back South," Martin said, lifting the slave to his feet.

"Back South?" Eph repeated, shoving the men away.

The judge was now standing on the porch. "Larrabee!" he exclaimed, with an imperative gesture.

Eph loosened his hold on the overseer's coat and looked at the judge in surprise.

"Martin," the judge went on, in the same tone of command, "I forbid you to interfere with the officers."

"I shall not leave him to their mercy."

"Let him go!"

"I will not!"

Before Martin's vision floated the face of Helen Stafford; he saw Judge Northcote and Margaret Wright as through a mist. An awful sense of the situation surged over him—a fathomless abyss yawned at his feet—and from an infinite distance he heard the voice of Northcote, like the voice of Fate, above the torrent of his emotion, mingling with the words of Morris: "God gives us life. He gives us freedom!"

"Do you defy me?" the judge demanded.

"Yes!"

The Puritan inflexibility of purpose in principle overmastered Martin's self-interest in this war with abstract justice. He stood before the judge, with one arm clutched across his breast, the other upraised, his eyes lifted to meet those of the man who had taken him out of bondage.

The judge's eyes flashed. He tried to speak—the words choked him. He laid his hand over his throat. Martin continued:

"You saved *me* from a tyrant. Do you condemn me for doing what you did yourself?"

"You—you are not a negro—you were not a slave." The judge wrenched at the scarf about his neck and extended his hands invitingly. He struggled to say more, his face was purple; but Martin's voice rang out:

"If I had been a negro would you have refused to save me?"

"The law—the law—" the judge cried. "We must obey the law! My dear Martin, can't you see—" His voice broke; he trembled with emotion.

"No," said Martin. "We must obey the law of mercy—the law of justice. God will not forgive you or me if we violate it."

Judge Northcote's face grew white. All tenderness disappeared. His fingers tightened—he raised a clinched hand.

"Do you presume to instruct *me*—here, before all these people—and to defy my authority? I tell you, the law of this land is supreme. Leave that man, and come into the house!"

"Judge Northcote," Martin's words came slowly and from his heart, "you make a distinction between a black man and a white man. You revere a law that makes humanity a crime. I love you, father, but I cannot follow you here. I shall go with Enoch."

He turned to the officer and pulled up his sleeve. "You can put one handcuff on him and one on me, if you're afraid of me."

The officer shook his head. "I ain't afraid of the two of you."

"Martin!" pleaded Mrs. Wright. "Are you losing your senses?"

"He's losing everything he has in life," the judge cried in a half-frenzy, leaning far out from the porch and shaking his finger as he spoke. "He is disgracing me—disgracing the name of Northcote! Martin! Martin! Stop! If you follow that negro, I *forbid* you to return!"

"Dear Martin!" cried Mrs. Wright, sobbingly, "*don't* go! Come back to us!"

Martin wavered for an instant at this appeal of love; then sadly shook his head.

"No. I cannot sell my manhood, little mother. My place is here."

END OF BOOK I

Book II

Chapter I

FIVE years have passed since Martin Brook left Elmhurst.

He is standing now, at the close of a June day, by an open window of a little cottage in the village of Shelburne, on the eastern shore of Lake Champlain. The hundred miles or more—the rough and rugged miles so wearisome to travellers by stage and packet-boat and saddle—have not put him half as far away from Sandy Hill and former friends as have his experiences during these past five years.

His plain black clothes, relieved only by a white linen stock that is nearly concealed under the rolling collar of his coat—a compromise in fashion that preserves the clerical aspect and rejects the tone of ritualism—indicate his calling to be that of a Methodist preacher.

The lines in his face express the sub-conscious austerity of an earnest thinker. The mobility of his features not only redeems this sternness, but conveys a sense of innate humor. The introspective look in his gray-blue eyes denotes consecration to some mighty cause.

There are splashes of gray in his blond hair, at the temples, that seem oddly out of place in one so young—one who, in his athletic vigor and buoyant health, appears to lack at least one year of thirty. They seem also to tell the story of some great sorrow repressed in solitude, an act of will which the strength of jaw and firmness of lip show to be within his capabilities. Besides, there is an air of melancholy about him that is seen only in those who bear the burden of an inflexible purpose for the good of others.

The room in which he stands is small and poorly furnished, dwarfed by the vastness of the view without. It is an upper room. He can touch the ceiling where the roof comes slanting down on either hand. A small bed, with a blue and white cotton spread; a wash-stand, with an earthen pitcher and bowl; a rocking-chair, that inanely holds out its arms to a guest who never comes; and a small hair trunk, that is studded with brass-headed nails, and "M. B." marked with them on the curved lid, fill more than half the space. A set of four home-made shelves of unpainted pine, strung one below the other on a stout cord run through holes in the ends of the boards, is suspended from hooks in the left-hand wall opposite the bed. On these shelves are a few books, the working tools of an itinerant Methodist preacher. From a peg above the trunk in the corner near the window, and across from the head of the bed, hang a pair of saddle-bags. There are a few clothes on a row of hooks by the door—the tent-shaped room having entrance from the end opposite the window. The lead-colored wood-work is loosely jointed. The door is fastened by a thumb-latch that clicks when it is touched, and the small sash of the window is propped up by a stick. On the floor is a rag carpet. In the centre of the room is a plain deal table, neatly covered with a sheet of white newspaper. A wooden arm-chair stands in front of the table, half turned about. Upon the table are a round wooden inkstand, with quill pens stuck in holes in the top; a perforated box of sand to dry the ink on a written page; a candlestick, with tallow candle, iron snuffers, tinder-box and flint, and a well-thumbed Bible. Sheets of an unfinished sermon are snugly piled at the lower left, and at the centre is an open letter.

The twilight is deepening into night.

Martin watches the stars come out in the cloudless sky. He sees the north-star, the beacon of the escaping slave. The ray from that immutable signal of God's presence renews the fire on the altar of his heart. It is a fire that has burned, now fiercely, now dimly, as circumstance controlled it, throughout these years since he left Elmhurst, but always with the same unchanging purpose—a light to guide the honest fugitive to freedom.

Martin turns from the window and throws himself into the chair before the table. He picks up the letter, and holds it tenderly. He cannot see to read it; there is no need of his doing so, for he knows the contents.

And while he sits in this little room at Shelburne, resting his head on his hand, his thoughts, stirred to action by this letter, go step by step along the way from Elmhurst to the present scene. Seeing with memory's eyes, hearing with memory's ears, he once more lives the past.

When Martin looked for the last time at that group on the portico at Elmhurst, and declared his duty to the oppressed, he saw Judge Northcote turn from him and walk tremblingly, but with head erect, towards the open door. He saw Mrs. Wright start forward, and heard her exclamation of alarm as she put her arm about the judge and helped him over the threshold. Martin's impulse was to rush to the tottering man; but the voice of Graham stopped him.

"Move on!" Graham ordered.

Martin laid his hand on Enoch's arm and went with him, bareheaded, down the path, out into the street, amid a jeering crowd, and on to the inn.

He saw Eph Larrabee trying to keep back the crowd that was pressing on every side. He saw the frightened face of Mary Whittaker at her gate.

He saw the overseer thrust the negro up and fling him down, with a rattling of chains, on the bottom of the cart. He heard Enoch's words, "Good-bye, Marse Martin."

He stood in the road and watched the jolting cart until it disappeared behind a jutting ledge.

These incidents were like the unreality of a dream; but as he caught the true significance of the noise about him—the shrill voices of men in hot discussion—and saw the face of Sidney Graham before him on the porch, his mind grew clearer. He felt the need of solitude; a place where he could think calmly and quiet the tumult in his heart, away from the curious and unsympathetic crowd.

He pushed by Graham without a word, entered the hotel, and locked himself in a room.

A murmur of voices still reached his ears, but he did not heed it; nor the rapping at his door and the calling of Larrabee to him from outside.

Overwhelmed with a sense of irreparable loss, in the reaction from the terrible excitement of the past hour, there surged over him a feeling of utter loneliness. There was no one to whom he could turn—no one on whom he could lean. He realized now how dependent he had grown on the sustaining counsel of the judge. For the first time since that day of his boyish dash for liberty he was alone.

Suddenly there came to him a thought of Helen. He was not alone. Her love was now the sustaining force; and with this thought he realized emancipation from the dominance of Judge Northcote's mind—an instant growth to the mental stature of a man.

And yet there seemed to be in this assertion of himself an act of disloyalty, of ingratitude to the man who had saved him from bondage and shaped his character. The agony of a rebirth tormented him.

At first he could perceive only the objective phase of what he had done; but as his mind struggled on, the subjective motive and result appeared to him.

Over and over again he reviewed the scene with the judge. Why had he done this? Why had he given up everything in life? Not for love of the individual Enoch. No; if love for the individual had controlled him, there were the judge, for whom he had profound reverence, and little mother. Dear little mother! That one influence that had caused him to waver in his purpose. Her plea to him had sounded the very key-note of love.

No. There was something stronger than a personal love: duty to a principle.

Judge Northcote, who had approved of his fight with the butcher's boy—who had not censured him for throwing Graham into the river—who had saved the ragged, friendless Martin Brook from a tyrant, and had taken Enoch himself into the household and given him considerate treatment as a human being — Judge Northcote, the idol of his heart, had denounced him and cast him off for acting with precisely the same motive towards Enoch.

And Judge Northcote had done this because of the law—a law that created a distinction between a white man and a black man; because of his reverence for the theory of the law's supremacy, regardless of right and justice.

Martin paced the room with hands clinched behind him.

"Judge Northcote, the man I have revered, is wrong," he said, aloud. "I have never questioned the rightness of his opinions before. It's because I dared to do so that he cast me off." He paused abruptly. "No," he said. "That is unjust to him and false to myself. He didn't disown me because I differed with *him,* but because I differed with the law. But I am right. There is a principle back of this which is higher than the law, and I shall devote my life to that great cause of learning how to apply this principle—the righting of a law that works injustice to a people on account of their color; that works injustice to every one who rejects the letter of the law."

If there were only some one with whom he could talk—some one in sympathy with this new conception of law and duty, some one who was wiser than he and could relieve him of this awful pressure of introspection.

"Dr. Whittaker!" he cried, going quickly to the bell and summoning a servant. "It is strange that I didn't think of him."

"Go to Dr. Whittaker's house," he said to the man, "and request him to come here to me at once."

He paced the room impatiently until the servant returned.

"The doctor ain't home, sir," the man reported, "and he won't be back before to-morrow afternoon."

Martin motioned the servant away as if the man were to blame, and flung himself into a chair. But in a moment more he was on his feet.

"I'll go to Mary," he said. He looked about for his hat.

A half-humorous, half-tragic recollection flashed through his mind; he had left Elmhurst without so much as a hat.

This fact started a new train of thought.

He put his hand in his pocket, and drew out the knitted steel-bead purse that little mother had made for him. There was a moderate sum of money in it.

A realization of his material situation came to him; but, in the confidence of youth, this did not appall him.

There was no sordid thought to turn him aside from duty. Love, gratitude, the loss of friendships, the going from Elmhurst under a cloud, these appealed to him and wrung his heart, but not the loss of wealth.

As he dropped his purse back in his pocket, his hand touched his fob. He looked at his watch. The hour was past midnight. It was too late to go to Mary now; he must wait till morning.

Sleepless, he sat the night through, thinking of the future. How could he meet the change in his relations to the world? Wherever these musings led him, they ended in the one conviction: a vision of Helen looked at him out of the misty problem. His first duty lay there—the broader way to a life-work would be opened to him, somehow and by some means. His object in life had at last been defined; he needed only to figure out its proportions. But his first step must be towards Helen.

As soon as it was daylight of the tardy autumn day, he sent a message to Mrs. Wright. He wrote a dozen notes and tore them up before he was suited with the one sent. Some were blotted with tears; some were too formal; but he felt that he could not go to Elmhurst without permission. Yet there was need of his personal belongings. He could not go away without them.

He wrote of this necessity, but he ended with the cry of his heart—his love for her, his grief at parting, his appeal for one more word of good-bye. He told her of his plans. He said that he should go to Albany—and Helen—that very morning.

His messenger came back without a reply; but, closely following him, Eph Larrabee appeared, with the little hair trunk, a hat, a small packet, and a note in Mrs. Wright's delicate handwriting. Martin tore open the message. It ran:

"MY DEAR MARTIN,—The judge forbids me to hold communication with you, and tells me to send your clothing to the inn, by Larrabee. For the first time in my life, I disobey my brother, and send you this note to assure you of my love and sympathy. It is wiser not to call at Elmhurst, since the judge is not well and you would be denied the privilege of seeing him. I send the things I know you will need, and also a small parcel, which is to remain unopened, my dear Martin, until you are settled in your new home, and wish to have one more reminder of the tender love of

"Your sorrowing but affectionate

"LITTLE MOTHER."

Martin went out from the inn and walked slowly up the street, the tears blinding his eyes.

Mary saw him and came to meet him at the gate.

"Martin!" she cried, holding out her hand.

He took her hand in his. "You won't refuse to say good-bye," he said, bitterly.

"Refuse?" She led him into the house.

"Haven't you heard of my being turned out of house and home?"

"Only the rumors, Martin. Tell me the truth. Oh, this has been a terrible night!"

"I was coming to see you last night, but it was too late," he said, and told her of the scene at Elmhurst. "I am right, Mary. I am right," he added. "It isn't stubbornness or ingratitude; it is the right of the question."

"Yes," she said, "you were right in trying to help Enoch, and I believe Judge Northcote will admit this; but don't go away to-day. Wait until father comes—"

"You don't know Judge Northcote, and if he were to forgive the personal offence and I were to go back now, it would never be the same place. I should have to ask him many questions that he would dislike to hear. No, I cannot recede from my position. There is a mighty truth involved in this action."

"But where can you go?"

He hesitated an instant.

"I shall go to—to Albany, first, and take up the law."

"Albany?" she said, turning her face from him.

"Yes," he said. "I must go, Mary. I *must* see Helen at once, and tell her about this change in my prospects. She will help me—make me stronger—with her love."

Mary did not reply. He looked at her, half offended.

The sound of the stage was heard. Martin started up.

"Good-bye, Mary. There is one thing I can say: I am glad you are here to comfort little mother."

"Good-bye, Martin," she said. They shook hands.

Martin hurried to the inn. Eph Larrabee had already put his trunk in the big boot of the stage.

"Well, I swan!" said Eph. "I don't edzackly git the meanin' o' this, but I guess the judge 'll find out some day you're right."

"I hope so," Martin said.

He looked back as the stage started away—back over the heads of the loungers who had no friendly word for him—back through the golden-tinted autumn leaves, and saw Mary standing by her gate, her hand uplifted, waving him good-bye.

But during the long ride that followed, Mary was lost to mind in the ever-present vision of Helen. He prepared his mind for the meeting that was so near; arranged his thoughts in sequence, that he might be ready to give her an unbiased statement of the events of yesterday and tell her of his plans.

"Dear Helen," he mused; "I can almost see the look of approval in your eyes and feel the pressure of your hand on mine."

Once more he found himself in the parlor of the Stafford mansion, but now instead of hearing Helen's voice he was listening to the butler's formal excuses from Mrs. Stafford, who was too ill to receive him, and to the announcement that Colonel Stafford was not in the city.

"Miss Stafford?" Martin said, with a feeling of sudden dread.

"Miss Stafford is in New York, sir."

"New York?" Martin repeated, vaguely. He walked slowly to the door, but paused, a new thought occurring to him. "Please convey my respects to Mrs. Stafford, and ask her if she will favor Mr. Brook with Miss Stafford's New York address."

He did not return to the parlor, but waited in the hall-way for the reply. He mechanically took the slip of paper on which the address was written, and went away, half stunned, without a word of thanks to the servant.

The possibility of Helen's absence—of a failure to see her and pour out his soul to her—had never appeared to his mind.

The reality was so different from the expectancy that it dazed him for the moment; but as he walked along to his hotel the unreasonableness of his emotions became apparent to him.

"Of course," he said, "she doesn't know of this matter. I'm glad I thought of that address. I must write her. That's the only way left for me. But I wish it were otherwise."

Impelled by the force of his love for her, he wrote at once, giving a clear account of the change in his prospects. As he followed the logic of his mental action, in putting his ideas on paper, he grew firmer in the conviction that there was but one course for him to pursue. He must take up the legal profession. That was a plain deduction. His studies with the judge were, after all, destined to become the foundation of the new work, which the judge himself had so bitterly condemned. There was a feeling of retributive justice in this fact.

He believed that he would have no difficulty in finding just the right place in some lawyer's office, where he could complete those studies and gain admission to the bar. When once established, he would give his best energies of mind and body to this problem of human liberty; and as a lawyer discover and attempt to rectify the injustice of the law.

All this he wrote to Helen, and in the interval before her helpful response could be looked for he would occupy his time in securing the position he desired. He started out, brave in the consciousness of his own integrity of purpose.

The disillusioning of his mind; the breaking down of his confidence in himself; the learning of that lesson which so many men have been forced to learn—the indifference of the busy world to the needs of aspiring youth — now came to him. These unlooked-for experiences came, too, with double force, because of his belief that it was necessary to say to Helen that his plans were perfected, and that he had become established. But day after day, as he turned from the coldness or the polite unconcern of the men he applied to, the fact of his helplessness enveloped him like an enervating mist.

His money was already melted away to the merest pence. He saw that he must begin to earn something, and that he must take less expensive lodgings. The latter he discovered in a small tavern down by the river, which fitted his purse, if not his tastes; and he resolved, as a temporary relief, to go to work in some printing-office, with a view to ultimately doing editorial writing on the one great theme. He recalled, as a cheering memory, how the judge had told him at the start that the printer's trade would always afford him a living.

But the proof of this was not apparent as he tramped the streets, only to find that in the printing-offices, as in the lawyers' offices, there was scant interest in the unemployed, and that editorial work was entirely beyond his reach.

Night after night he returned to the tavern, tired and almost hopeless; almost, not wholly so. For, in the constant trust reposed in Helen, he was buoyed up by the hope that her message would surely come. Still the days passed without reply from her.

He had written to Mary, also, explaining as much of the delay in securing a permanent position as his pride would permit. An answer came from her immediately; a message of cheer and encouragement, and yet one that might have proved disheartening, had it not been for the sincerity of his own faith. In her letter she told him of an interview her father had with the judge. "Mr. Northcote," she wrote, "seems very much altered in his manner. He was discourteous to father. I think his health is affected by the loss of you. Mrs. Wright, whom I saw yesterday, sent her love to you. It is evident that you were right in your opinion of the judge, as well as in the great principle you have taken up."

Martin was not surprised or angered by this confirmation of his opinions. Instead of this, the letter reawakened the interest he felt in the cause of liberty—an interest forced for the present somewhat into abeyance, because of the demands of personal needs. In the search for daily bread he was compelled to neglect consideration of the vaster motive of his outgoing—the duty of helping the helpless.

Indeed, the problem of living was now become so serious that, as a man in actual need, the idea of his being a helper to others appealed to him in grotesque gravity.

At this moment, when his purse was empty, and he was beginning to suffer the annoyance of feeling the lack of Enoch's care of his clothes; when he was lapsing into a state of shabby gentility that was harder to bear than hunger; when he fully realized that study of the law was impracticable, and that even his trade was not available for more than transient work, he happened upon the little packet sent him by Mrs. Wright. He had put it away in his trunk, to be opened when he was "settled in his new home," as she had requested.

To-night, as he reluctantly admitted that he was homesick, and his mind was full of the cruelty of the world, he took up the parcel and sat holding it for a long time in his hand. There were no external signs on the package to indicate its contents. The impression that perhaps it might contain a letter from the dear little mother grew stronger and stronger.

The desire to hear from her overcame his scruples about her wish. He broke the seal.

Inside a little box lay a purse with ten gold eagles.

Martin dropped his head in his hands upon the table before him and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, little mother, little mother!" he moaned. "You knew better than I what this going out in the world meant. Charity! Charity! And from you!"

He rose and walked the floor, trembling in an emotion of resentment. "Is there a personal God?" he cried. "A God who can see the misery of this world and not destroy it?"

His heart yearned with love for little mother, but his pride asserted itself.

He put the purse back in the box and locked it in his trunk.

"I can't touch that. No, I'll work on the wharf first."

The stress of his feeling overpowered him. He picked up his hat and passed down the uncarpeted stairs to the hall door. The narrow room stifled him — the outer air alone could give him breath. The habit of freedom was strong upon him.

Life seemed darker than the night, as he stepped into the street. Shadows moved across the plane of vision. The shadow of Helen, in her silence, fell on him like a destroying power. He began to doubt even Helen.

He pulled his hat down over his eyes and dropped his head forward, as he shut the door behind him. He paid no attention to objects about him. His only desire was to be in action and alone. He started vigorously forward, and ran into the arms of Elisha Morris.

"My dear young friend!" Morris exclaimed, holding him back and recognizing him. "I'm glad to see you. How are the good folks in Sandy Hill?" He pushed Martin before him into the public room.

"I haven't seen them for some time," Martin said, trying to evade him. Morris's assertive way was always annoying to him, but now the preacher seemed to be intruding upon his private misery.

"What?" Morris insisted. "I hope there isn't any trouble." His keen eye seemed to bore into Martin's secret thoughts. "I hope you haven't known sorrow—haven't lost faith—haven't backslidden?"

"Pretty nearly," Martin said.

"Come up to my room and tell me all about it," Morris urged.

Martin was carried along despite his will. He not only went to the preacher's room, but, under the shrewd questioning of this older man, he related his experiences—all but his love for Helen and the bitterness of his disappointment at not seeing or hearing from her. He was moved to a confidence that he all the while resented. When he had concluded, Mr. Morris rose and towered above him.

"My dear young brother," he declared, "this is plain to me—plain as a pike-staff. You have been saved as a brand from the burning. You have been plucked from the altar of Baal to become a torch in the service of the true God."

"What do you mean?" Martin asked.

"Mean?" cried the preacher. "I mean that you shall not try the law, but that you shall join our ministry."

"Impossible," said Martin. "I've never thought of such a thing. Besides, I haven't the means for study."

"Nothing is impossible to God," Morris asserted. "We need action and piety in the vineyard, not scholarship. But you know more about theology now than I did when I entered the church. You are a natural speaker. You must come with me. I'm going on my circuit, and you can get a horse somewhere and ride with me. I'll attend to your case, at Conference, when the proper time comes." He stooped over Martin. "Is there anything to prevent?" he asked, suddenly. "You haven't been getting into any scrape, have you?"

He waited for Martin to speak. The minutes dragged slowly on.

"No," Martin said, at last, "there is nothing in the way except my own feeling; but I cannot give you an answer now. I must think this matter over seriously."

"You will remain here?"

"Yes."

"Take your own time, my young friend," Morris said, blandly. "I shall return to this house, God permitting, two weeks from to-day. I am only here to meet a brother preacher and go with him on the circuit. Good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye," said Martin, following Morris down stairs and resuming his walk. There was need of free air, surely, with this new suggestion sounding in his ears.

"The ministry?" he mused, as he went along the dark street. "The Methodist ministry. That is utterly impossible." The strange coincidence of his meeting with Morris occurred to him. Here that man had barred his way towards the outer way for a second time—once, as he was leaving the church in Sandy Hill, disgusted with a Methodist revival; and now, as he was leaving his room, disgusted with the world.

Was this a leading by the Invisible Power? Martin went over the incidents of his conversion. Morris had guided him then—was he guiding him to-night?

Martin questioned this. He had never engaged in active work in the Methodist Church, although he had become a member. Perhaps his interest in Helen just at that time in Sandy Hill had diverted his thoughts into a more personal channel. At all events, the prospect opened up by Morris was foreign to his conception of a career.

"No," he said, aloud. "I reject that idea. My work calls for the law. I can't limit myself. I believe in Methodism—all but the simplicity of dress and habits—and in the personality of God." He stood still. "Yes," he said firmly, "in the personality of God. For there *is* a guidance. I am committed to a work through divine guidance; but that very work makes it impossible for me to become a preacher. I must be a lawyer."

But while he said this he perceived that the opportunity to enter the legal profession was denied him. There was the rub. And behind the multitude of reasons for and against the new idea loomed the problem of his duty.

He saw the shackled hands of Enoch held up in mute appeal.

Still there was some one besides himself to be considered. Helen's views might differ from his; to Helen, therefore, he must submit the case.

He returned with haste to the tavern. Again he wrote to her, and this letter was, as before, an argument and a plea. On the assumption that she had failed to get his former letter, he briefly reviewed the time, from the moment of his differences with the judge, and, in the light of the unexpected, he wrote his own conclusion. The way seemed to open before him. He declared that the ministry *was* the appointed field.

The formulating of the case acted on his mind, trained as it was by the judge to a judicial system of reasoning, with convincing effect. The objective side of the leading became clearer, while there appeared suddenly the more subtle doubt of his spiritual fitness. This was a question he must struggle with alone, in prayerful searchings of the heart. His religious instinct was quickened in the conscientious consideration of his reverence for the holy office.

A material view seldom troubled him, and now that phase was entirely ignored. He argued that, since all other paths seemed closed and this one opened by no volition of his own, the means would be provided by the Supreme Power if the call was from God.

In the days that now ensued, he reached an affirmative state of mind, and was prepared to debate the finer issues with Morris as soon as that man and moment should arrive. He had completely satisfied himself on the question of the integrity of his motive, that was now grown firm in the expectation of Helen's sanction of his course. She stood in the relation of the outer world's opinion, no less than in the closer relation of a personal love. If she approved—as she surely would—then he could feel that his entrance upon the ministry was right to her as his wife. The two remaining questions were for Morris to answer: The field, as an arena for Martin in his avowed character of emancipator; and the ministry, as a spiritual profession. If the

Methodist pulpit was open to him on these terms of freedom and fitness, he was ready to enter it.

The fortnight passed. On the day when Morris was expected to arrive, the long-looked-for letter came from Helen. Happy omen!

Martin took the letter from the post-office with a thrill of joy. He could not profane it with a hasty glance, but carried it to the privacy of his room, that no vulgar eye might witness his emotions on reading it.

"Dear Helen!" he said, as he sat for a moment before breaking the seal. "Forgive me for doubting you!"

He touched the precious message reverently to his lips. The perfume of roses filled the air with the fragrance of her presence. He carefully opened the letter and read:

"MY DEAR MR. BROOK,—Both of your letters from Albany have reached me here. I have also had a long letter from my aunt in Sandy Hill, telling me of the excitement caused by the negro Enoch. From that, and your own graphic picture of the scene, I can understand that this shocking incident must have distressed you all very much.

"You ask me to write frankly on the subject of your professional plans; but really I scarcely know what to say. Your splendid abilities as a speaker, reader, and writer, qualities which Judge Northcote often spoke of to me in the highest praise, are certainly in your favor. I believe, too, that our Church is in need of just such talents as you possess. You know that dear Uncle Rufus, with all his goodness, is quite prosy in his sermons. The Methodist Church, of which I have only a slight knowledge, seems to me to be composed of persons not your equals in social station; and I do not understand what you mean by 'agonizing' over the selection of a profession. I have too high an opinion of your judgment to believe that you will be deceived through your emotions. Is it not wiser to leave what may be termed the ecstasy of religious excitement to the poor, who have so few forms of diversion?

"My father is preparing to take my mother abroad, in the hope of restoring her to health, and I shall go with them. Because of this, and also on account of your own professional uncertainty, would not it be well for us to consider our future relations only in the light of an enduring friendship? I think so; and in saying this I ask you to remember me as your well-wisher and friend,

"HELEN STAFFORD."

He read the letter over and over again, until each word was burned into his memory.

He was still sitting there, too crushed and benumbed to heed a sound with mortal ears, when Morris opened his door and came in, full of life and energy.

"Why, my dear young friend," Morris said, in a tone that made each nerve in Martin's body quiver, "I've been pounding at your door two minutes. What's the matter? Are you sick?"

"No-o," Martin said, rising. Morris saw the letter in his hand.

"Bad news?" he asked. "I hope not. Not the judge, I hope?"

"It is not from Sandy Hill," Martin replied, trying to regain composure.

"Well, I'm sorry for you, whatever it is. You look as if you had been plunged through deep waters. God's ways are mysteries. You know we are oftentimes led to the light by suffering." Morris moved about the room. "Perhaps you're not ready to speak of that subject I mentioned—"

"I am ready," Martin said.

"Thank God! You convince me of the genuineness of your call to preach. My dear friend, a man who can come up out of a personal affliction—don't tell me you haven't had one, for I see it in your face—a man who can do that and not question the goodness of the Heavenly Father is a chosen son of God."

"Don't! don't talk that way!" Martin cried, stamping his foot and putting his hand up as if to ward off the words. "There *is* a question—" He went to the window and turned his back on Morris. "Will you kindly leave me for one hour? Come back in an hour, and I shall be myself."

Morris went up to Martin, with a gentleness he had never shown before. "May God, in His infinite wisdom, guide you, my friend," he said, and left the room, shutting the door noiselessly behind him.

Martin stood motionless for a time, the letter clutched in his hand.

The snapping of the wood in the fireplace, as the stick burned through and fell between the andirons, aroused him. He turned and looked first at the blazing embers and then at the letter. He drew a deep breath that expanded the muscles of his chest and lifted his shoulders, emitting it through his nostrils in a trembling sigh.

He walked firmly across the room and held the letter in the fire. The paper crinkled and fluttered as it slowly burned. The words still showed on the black, charred surface. He grasped the fragments in both hands and ground them to powder between his palms. He scattered the ashes on the coals.

He looked at his hands. They were covered with oily, offensive stains, and he held them from him. He moved quickly across the room, filled the earthen bowl with water, and washed his hands, rubbing them until not a trace of the black stains remained.

Then he drew an arm-chair before the hearth, and sat down, his chin resting on his breast, his hands closed hard on the ends of the chair arms.

There was nothing left of Helen Stafford in his life—nothing that the world could see.

Martin was sitting, to all outward appearances calm and self-contained, when Morris returned. He heard the preacher's rap this time and bade him enter. Morris eyed him sharply.

"Brother Morris," Martin said, as he handed him a chair. "I have thought deeply on the subject we spoke of when you were here two weeks ago. There are no earthly ties that bind me; but am I suited to the ministry?"

"Well, I should put it the other way: is the ministry suited to you? It's a hard life, and poorly paid—"

"I'm not thinking of wealth," Martin interrupted. "You know my history. I am resolved on one course: to go into a profession in which I can work to undo a great legal wrong; to help the slave—"

"My dear brother, is there a greater slavery than sin?"

"Pardon me, the sin I shall aim at is slavery."

"There are no slaves in the North, but there are plenty of sinners. Now, enter the Church and fight the devil wherever you find him. There won't be any lack of opportunity."

"That is true, but there is yet a question to be asked, since you so readily dispose of the spiritual problem. You appear to leave that to my own conscience—"

"Certainly I do. I am governed by what I call the 'leading.' You will see that the Lord approves of your going. These doubts indicate a fine nature. But, my young friend," and Morris laid a hand on Martin's knee and looked into his eyes, "you are not well—you are pale. What is the cause—"

"Brother Morris, whatever the cause may be, it is past, and I still live. It is my own private sorrow. But this grief has no more effect on my decision than on the vow I made when I left Elmhurst. I shall not go into the ministry because of personal disappointment. My mind was made up before that trial came to me."

"I'm glad again," Morris said. "Everything confirms my theory of your call."

"Not everything. There is one point you seem wilfully to ignore. I shall go, if at all, for the sole purpose of preaching freedom. The bar is my choice, but if the pulpit is offered me instead, I will accept it, because it will give me a chance to help free the negroes. Is there any reason why I should not do this?"

"No," said Morris, thoughtfully, rubbing his chin with his broad fingers. "No; but you will learn that a young man's views are liable to change."

"Mine will not," Martin replied.

"Oh, well, leave that to time. Get a horse and go with me over the circuit. It will be practice for you till Conference time next spring. I'll introduce you as a coming preacher, and will see to it that you're admitted on trial."

"A horse?" Martin said. "I have no means—"

"I can get you an outfit of horse and saddle-bags for seventy-five dollars—I'll lend you a Bible, if you haven't one."

The recollection of little mother's purse darted through Martin's mind. The thought caused him to catch his breath. Her gift was not a charity—it was Providence!

He sprang to his feet.

"I will go with you." he said, offering Morris his hand.

Now, after five years, sitting here in his study at Shelburne, with an open letter still before him, Martin asks himself:

"Am I doing all that can be done to free the slave? Have I been true to my promise—true to God?"

Chapter II

NIGHT gently spreads its influence over the scene as Martin sits here in his little room at Shelburne, with that question still unanswered. His world seems so small to him because of this desire to free the slaves.

The darkness beyond and about him typifies the moral and spiritual condition of the wide region through which he had ridden as a Methodist preacher.

The introspective mood is still upon him. The panorama of his life moves rapidly. There are some scenes on which he would close his eyes. He cannot trust himself to look on the picture of the agony of the first weeks, after he had gone with Morris on the circuit, riding the old gray horse he had bought with little mother's gold. He had learned, too, that God would not endure a divided love. "Thou shalt have no other Gods before Me," and Helen Stafford was once his idol. He had leaned on her in his first hour of trouble, not on God's hand, and he had been taught to know the frailty of a human reed. But he had risen above the misery of that trial, stronger than before.

Stronger, too, in his determination to follow the one great object of his new life—the emancipation of the slave. The clank of Enoch's fetters sounded ever in his ears.

And yet there seemed to be no opportunity to carry out this purpose; for Morris's circuit lay in the region of the Hudson Valley, and the preacher's mind was bent on making converts to Methodism, not to the anti-slavery cause.

Whenever Martin spoke to him, during the early months of their intimate association, reminding him of this motive, Morris had but one reply: "Don't be impatient. God will lead you. Save the sinner nearest you."

"But I didn't enter this field with that intention," Martin had declared again and again; and Morris had gone on, smiling at his inexperience. For to the preacher's mind this was but a phase of the ordeal through which a young man must pass, in his progress towards the true ministerial function. Plans, opinions, ideals, must all be merged into the one grand acceptance of God's guidance to the true faith and understanding of Methodism.

Martin had experienced no difficulty in understanding the doctrines of the Church, nor in accepting them. His knowledge of theology was, as Morris had affirmed, far in advance of his needs, when, at Conference time, after a winter of lay-service with his preceptor, he took the vows of a clerical probationer.

But even before the expiration of that period of service within the Church he realized that the Methodist ministry did not afford him the opportunity he desired, although there seemed to be no receding from his new position. As the law offices and newspaper offices had been closed to him, so was the Church itself, as he beheld the actual field. He was hampered on every side by the limitations of his opportunity. In the circuit to which he was first assigned, after entering the Church, the people were indifferent, or ignorant, or positively vicious. He began to comprehend what Morris had meant by "the sinner nearest to hand." There was need of work among these people; and in the earnestness of his nature he engaged in this, with a zeal that gradually and unconsciously drew him aside from the main intent.

Since beginning his round as an independent circuit-rider he had met Morris but once or twice. On one of these occasions Morris had said: "Keep on, dear brother. You are finding out for yourself that your plans are not always God's plans."

This remark had made a deep impression on Martin's mind, and he had gone forward with a prayer for clearer guidance. Was his will opposed to God's? He questioned his own judgment, and rested his cause with God, preaching wherever he could gain a hearing—in school-houses, brick-yards, private-houses—anywhere that men would listen to him.

But whenever he found an ear into which he could pour the doctrine of human freedom—a rare chance among men who were either rabidly pro-slavery or else so engrossed in their own poverty as to be unapproachable—he talked for the slaves.

Because of this he became known as "the crazy preacher," "the fanatic," "the Methodist fool," and suffered in this persecution, as only an honest, sensitive nature can suffer from a misunderstanding of his true motive.

Those were cruelly bitter days to him. The privations of his life, the exposure, the hardships in a thousand forms, after the luxury of Elmhurst, were almost unendurable.

And yet the gravest suffering came to him in an immaterial form. He was torn and ground between the upper millstone of a consciousness that he was not carrying out his purpose, and the nether millstone of his doubt of a divine calling to the ministry.

In the logic of his mental conscience he was a crusader, urged on by the vision of Enoch's imploring hands; but in the depths of his spiritual conscience he was a minister of God. The imperiousness of his vow to duty and the awful sacredness of his vow to the ministerial office clashed, with every fibre of his being caught between them.

From an agony of soul, he used to throw himself from his horse, in the solitude of his journeyings along the roads in the wilderness, and wrestle with the spirit, praying for light, for promptings, for deliverance from a stubbornness of will, for a fuller consecration to God.

It was during one of these most terrible seasons of self-doubt that his duty as a rider on the circuit took him back to Sandy Hill. His circuit lay north of that village and he must pass through it. This was his first visit there since leaving Elmhurst. The people he had known—the people who once were proud to shake the hand of Northcote's heir—now turned their backs on him. The preacher in charge—a stranger to him—asked him, from courtesy, to conduct the service, that one Sunday, in the church where he had first seen Morris, the church where he had been converted. But there was only a handful of people present. Not one of his old friends at Elmhurst came to hear him. Mary Whittaker was there, and the doctor's house sheltered him for a night. It was then that the doctor said: "Be true to yourself, Martin, whatever the world says or does."

It was on this ride, also, that he had chanced to pass the spot where Jacobs, his former master, lived when he ran away. The house was gone. Not a trace of it remained. But in the old garden, amid the rank weeds and thistles, a few hardy, self-sown flowers were blooming in a riot of color. He had planted them himself, years before, and they had survived the wreck and ruin of the place. He wondered if Jacobs were yet alive, and if that whip was still cutting into some poor boy's cheek.

Again he sees Enoch in the cart—Enoch in chains, and with a bloody wound on his head!

The memory of a cruel blow on his own cheek causes the retrospective mood to fall from him. He is here—in Shelburne—in the present. There is duty—duty—duty!

Martin paces his room. The darkness does not prevent him; he knows every inch of space, every object in the place, and the confines of the room are like the confines of his pastoral charge—petty, narrow, insufficient.

He, Martin Brook, the man who would do worthy deeds, world-embracing deeds in the interests of humanity, is cribbed and circumscribed by the meagreness of his field.

"The preaching of the gospel is a holy work," Martin exclaims, "but what *is* the gospel? It is the helping of the oppressed; the teaching of men to read, that they may comprehend God's Word; the freeing of mankind. This was Christ's injunction; and it seems to be the fate of all those who teach Christ's loving message to suffer persecution as the Saviour did."

All at once the words of the letter on his table come back to him.

He strikes a spark from the flint into the tinder and lights the candle. He sits down at the table to re-read the letter. His eye catches first the centre square—the lightest spot in the folded sheet—where the inscription is written:

"Rev'd Martin Brook, Shelburne, Vt."

The sight of his name causes him to spring to his feet.

"What has been accomplished in these five years for the slave?" he said. "Nothing. It seems impossible to keep straight in this path of duty. Here I am, admitted to full membership in the Conference, and given a local charge—no longer a circuit-rider, but a minister with a pulpit—and yet I have done nothing in this pulpit I aspired to from the start towards the fulfilment of this pledge to my soul!"

He sits down and takes up the letter.

Beneath the space bearing his address, on the space that was covered by the flap and sealed with a red wafer, is the signature. He looks at it, a gleam of tenderness in his eyes:

"Your respectful and affectionate friend, Mary Whittaker."

He reads:

"DEAR FRIEND MARTIN,—You will be surprised to hear that I am now in Keeseville, although you may have learned of my father's death. In that great sorrow I am sustained by a faith in God.

"You will be pleased to know that after your sermon in Sandy Hill I began to realize the need of an open profession of religion, and so was led to unite with the Methodist Church.

"I am now living with relatives here, having sold the old home in Sandy Hill, and am teaching school. Dear father was too generous to accumulate much worldly wealth.

"Because of my associations here, I recently met a gentleman from Troy—a Mr. Charles Chichester, who said he once saw you in Sandy Hill. I happened to mention that I used to live there, and he laughed at the way you whipped the butcher's boy. Mr. Chichester isn't a professor of religion, but he seems to be a very nice man. My uncle buys wool for him. He remarked that he had heard of your good work in the Church. It was very pleasant to hear that others like you and appreciate your services.

"I hope you have a comfortable boarding-place. Are you careful of your health? I trust so, because you could not be spared from the work you are doing. Are you still giving thought to the great Cause? You know how much my father was interested in that work. From what Mr. Chichester said, I gathered that he is an anti-slavery man, also, but in these times the subject is rarely spoken of.

"Have you heard of Mrs. Wright's long illness? She is suffering, I fear, in a way that God alone can relieve. Judge Northcote has given up the *Sentinel* to others, and now takes no active part in public affairs. He is never seen on the streets. Mr. Sidney Graham, who treated you with such inhuman cruelty, is in Europe, where, also, Miss Helen Stafford is sojourning. I am informed of their matrimonial engagement. They are to be married and then travel for some months.

"If, at any time, you can find leisure to write to me, I shall be glad to learn, from your own hand, that you are well, and happy in your work."

Martin laid the letter down, and sat for several minutes with his head resting on his hand.

"Am I doing some good work in the Church?" he mused. "Mary entered the Church through my poor influence? Is she right in her estimate of my work? She is always so clear-minded, so just, so helpful. Chichester? Yes, I remember that boy very well. That fight was for a principle—*the* principle. The Cause? Even Mary seems to question my earnestness."

He had become restless. His life-long habit, when disturbed in spirits, to seek the freedom of the outer air, grew irresistible. He blew out the candle, put on his hat, picked up a stout hickory walking-stick, and, suddenly remembering he must make no noise, quietly left his room.

The stairway on which his door opened led into a dark space, half corridor, half bedroom, occupied only when there was "company," and plunged abruptly into the sitting-room below, with a wall on either side and one step into the lower room projecting beyond the door.

Martin crept down this tunnel of a stairway, a hand on either sidewall, and cautiously lifted the latch, lest he should disturb his landlady; and so, softly across the sitting-room, to the outside door. He opened this slowly, and passed into the night, gently closing the door behind him.

"I mustn't disturb Mrs. Dalton," he thought. "Yes, this is a good boarding-place, I can assure Mary, but Mrs. Dalton thinks I'm a queer man, to go prowling about at night." He smiled at the recollection of his landlady's oddities. "Good soul," his thoughts ran on, as he swung out at a rapid pace, "she is very kind to take me as a boarder, when she is so opposed to all Methodists."

He pushed on, beyond the sleeping village, and turned to look back at it, lying in absolute silence.

"It is a small place," he exclaimed, "and it seems smaller by comparison with the great deeds done by great men. I, too, am trying to speak in the name of the Great Jehovah; but I have neither the voice of Allen nor the strength of McDonough. What can I do here? What am I accomplishing?"

An intruding recollection of Helen Stafford and his former faith in her annoyed him. "So she is to marry Graham," he mused, but swept the thought aside, and walked the faster. Her answer to his letter was ashes—ashes, as his heart had been for years to all but God's love.

He left the road, climbed a stone wall, and wandered into the fields, towards the lake, sinking down to rest in the solitude.

Once or twice he fancied that he could hear footsteps, as if some one were following him, stumbling over the stones. He was about to call out, when the clank of a cowbell explained the noise to his mind, and he sat quietly watching the stars.

But the spirit of action laid hold on him. He found it impossible to sit still. He rose and gazed into the heavens. Above him bent the infinite glories of the constellations in their deep blue settings. He felt that he was standing beneath the jewelled tabernacle of God.

"'Canst thou bind the sweet influence of Pleiads, or loose the bands of Orion?'" he cried aloud. "Is there no broader field? If not, then I will serve the Master patiently in the appointed way."

He started to retrace his steps.

The figure of a man loomed up before him out of the darkness.

Instinctively he placed himself on the defensive, clutching his heavy cane and raising it above his head.

"Who are you? What do you want? Speak, or I'll strike!"

The man dropped to his knees, his hands held out imploringly.

"Marse Martin! Marse Martin! doan't you know me?"

The stick fell from Martin's grasp.

"Enoch!" he cried.

Chapter III

"YAS, sah, it's ole Enoch, fo' suah, Marse Martin," the negro said, in a low tone, still on his knees and looking about cautiously. "Wasn't sartin 'twas you, 'fore you spoke—den I knowed yo' voice."

For a moment Martin stood breathless, doubting his own senses.

"How in the world did you get here—where *did* you come from?" Martin cried at last.

His voice broke the uncanny stillness of the night; he stood in silhouette against the starlit sky.

"Fo' Gawd's sake, don't talk so loud, Marse Martin," Enoch said, crouching lower.

"Why?" Martin demanded, resenting the rebuke as in the grotesque uncertainty of a dream and trembling from an emotion Enoch could not understand. He stooped forward and put both hands on the man, to assure himself of the reality of the scene. "Enoch! *Enoch!* Oh, you don't know what this means to me!" He straightened up, with clinched hands raised and face turned to the sky, breathing hard and fast.

"Please set down, Marse Martin," Enoch pleaded, crawling to him and taking hold of his coat. "Some one see you, sartin suah!"

"Yes, the world shall see me," Martin said.

"Dar ain't no 'scurity nowhar if you lets 'em see you. Please set down, sah."

"Security?" Martin said, as he dropped down on a bowlder, confused in the flood of thoughts.

"I was mighty suah you'd be glad to see ole Enoch," the negro said, with pathetic earnestness. Lying flat on the grass, he reached up a caressing hand and patted Martin's knee.

"Glad? Glad to see you?" Martin said. "Yes—yes; but I'm more than glad. I thank God for sending you here—to revive my purpose."

The intensity of his tone puzzled Enoch. "You ain't mad 'cause I come, be you?"

Enoch withdrew his hand. The motion — that of a beaten, yet faithful dog—recalled Martin from the introspective mood. He saw that he was not understood, and that it was impossible to make the man comprehend him.

"No, Enoch," he said, as to a child. "But why—how did you get here?"

"I come 'spressly to see you, Marse Martin."

His voice attracted Martin's attention because of the peculiar tone, before his intellect grasped the meaning of the words. It was not the sibilant note of a whisper, nor the rumble of a guttural. It had carrying power, but seemed to reach only the ear it was intended for—a quality of appeal that had the force of conviction, and yet was like a signal among wild creatures.

"But how did you know where to find me?" Martin said, unconsciously imitating the man's voice, once more touching him to be sure of his presence.

"I's des pow'ful glad you's glad, Marse Martin. I wanted to see you, sah. Dat's what I followed you fo'. I wanted to fin' you alone, Marse Martin—dat's hit—alone, all by yo'self. I was 'fraid. Dat's why I watched you all day."

"Watched me all day? Have you been here all day, without coming to me at the house?"

"We got heah las' night, sah, and didn't dare come in de daytime."

"'We?' Who is with you?" Martin said, glancing around.

"Oh, dey ain't no one heah, Marse Martin. Dey's hidin' in de bresh, down yon."

"Tell me what you mean," Martin commanded, impatiently.

"Yas, sah," Enoch hastened to answer. "Dar's fo' of us, sah, an' we's on our way to Canadah dis time, fo' suah."

"How did you find your way?"

"We's followed dat, sah," Enoch pointed solemnly to the north star. "Dat's de eye of de Lo'd, guidin' us to freedom!"

"But it doesn't shine by day, Enoch. It's like my own purpose—it disappears at times."

"Is dat so?" Enoch said, bewildered by Martin's words and manner. "Well, you know, we hides an' sleeps by day. We goes on by night. We's ben mo'n fo' months on de road."

"Four months? How have you lived—how have you got food?" Martin asked, incredulously.

"De good Lo'd, he provided. Co'se we had to tak' what we could fin'."

"They took you back to slavery—and you have again escaped? Tell me! Tell me all about it—your going, your coming back—everything! Did that man—that overseer, Griffin—did he take you back?" Martin's words trembled over each other.

"Yas, sah," Enoch said, confused at the flood of questions. "When dey stah'ted me off from Elmhurst, dey went down to Troy. Marse Griffin — he's de oberseer—put me 'boa'd de boat an' we went down de Hudson. I kep' mah eyes open an' dar didn't nuffin' 'scape me. I saw der was a way no'th, an' I made up mah min' to try it some day. One day ob freedom spoils a man fo' bein' a slave. Dar wa'n't no chance den, an' we went 'round to de ole place by sea. When I got dar, it wa'n't lak de ole plantation. Mah wife was dead, an' mah boy had took up wid one de gals on de nex' place. Marse Lyndon, he didn't come back fo' a long time, an' Marse Griffin, he wa'n't ve'y ca'ful 'bout me. Den mah boy, he mak heap o' trubble, 'cause dey sol' his gal an' took her down to Geo'gia. Den we made plans, but hit was a long time 'fore we had a chance to git away. Seben ob us stah'ted. Two was caught an' one died. An' heah we is, Marse Martin—fo' of us hidin' in de bresh."

"How did you come up the river and the lake?"

"Well, I reckon dar's some one a-lookin' fo' his boat," Enoch said, mysteriously. "We was helped along, across de ole State an' up into Penns'vany by our own people, in de mountains an' de ma'shes, an' when we got up fah 'nuff, we took the Undergroun'."

"The what?"

"De Undergroun' road."

"What do you mean by that?"

Enoch drew a small parcel from the inner pocket of his ragged woollen shirt and carefully unwound a rag, revealing a metal token. He laid this in Martin's hand.

"Dat's de ticket on de Undergroun'. You kin see I's honest."

"What is this? Money?" Martin asked, as he turned the copper over and over, without being able to decipher its figures and legends in the darkness.

"Yas, sah," Enoch said, wisely, "it's money, fo' suah. It's de price o' freedom. It's de ticket on de Undergroun' road. I's brung hit heah fo' you. Dey ain't no need ob it now. We's sartin to git on. But I heerd you was heah, an' I wanted to see you an' tell you dat ole Enoch was free again. Yas, sah—free once mo'. I learned a heap while I was with you, Marse

Martin, 'bout readin' an' writin', an' I's cahrin' fo' dese yeah po' folks an' showin' dem de way. When we gets to Canadah, we'll be in Gawd's land."

"God's land? Isn't this God's land where we are?"

"Not fo' de slave, Marse Martin."

"Don't call me master," Martin cried, starting up. "I am not your master."

"Cahn't get ober dat," Enoch said. "Ebery white man is Marse somebody to us po' black folks, sah. We's hid from dem as we does from de bloodhoun's. Ebery white man's han' is aginst us. If we's caught now, dey'll kill ole Enoch lak a rattler. I's took mah life in mah han'. I struck Marse Griffin. Marse No'thcote couldn't help me when I was with him, an' you couldn't keep me from Marse Lyndon. The laws is made fo' to catch us an' sen' us back."

Martin sat down. The piece of copper seemed to burn in his hand.

"You are right—you are right." After a moment's pause he asked: "Where did you get this, Enoch?" holding up the token.

"Dat's de token dey use to show dat de runaways is honest. Quaker gem'man gib it to me in Penns'vany. He got it from a gem'man in Injany, where der is frien's ob our people. If you shows dat, dey knows you is boun' by de oath."

"I don't understand you, Enoch," Martin said, shaking his head.

"Well, you see, I cahn't 'splain hit, Marse Martin, 'cause I doan't know, but I wants you to hab it, an' I wants to gib you de name ob de gem'man in Troy dat cahn tell you 'bout it—de one dat sent me heah."

"What is his name?"

"Marse Chichester."

"Charles Chichester?" Mary's letter, and her mention of this man, flashed into his mind. "Did he help you?"

"Yas, sah. When I showed him de token, he took car' ob us fo' two days; an' when I tole him who I was an' war I'd libed, he 'membered you. I tole him I was in Marse No'thcote's house at Elmhurst fo' years an' how I knowed you, and he was suah you'd help me, if I'd stop heah on de way, an' I felt lak I mus' see you once mo', fo' de sake ob de good ole days. Den he tole me jus' whar you was an' how to fin' you. He's de gem'man dat keeps de Undergroun' station in Troy."

Martin put the token in his pocket.

Perplexed by the fragmentary and strangely suggestive story of the man, he made no further attempt to solve the mystery.

Enoch had sprung out of the earth at his feet, and at the moment he was pleading for a wider field in which to work. From these black lips he had heard the denial that this was God's land—this region, wrung from a political power in Jehovah's name. But the claim of victory was a mockery—an insult to the Most High!

He, Martin Brook, who had consecrated his life to the freeing of the slave, was listening on a spot where freedom had been so rhetorically proclaimed to the unanswerable declaration that the boast of human freedom was a lie. For what had Ethan Allen striven? For what had McDonough fought? To establish liberty and the pursuit of happiness; to maintain national dignity in honor.

Yet here was a living proof of the falsity of these professions. Here was a man against whom every hand was raised, because his skin was black—the man who had saved the life of Martin Brook!

In the east, the first gleams of a summer morning shot upward. A pale gray light, suffused with rose tints, dissolved the secret-covering night as Enoch, on his knees, clasped Martin's hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Now I mus' be goin', Marse Martin. It's most sun-up an' I mus' get back to mah folks in de bresh."

"Enoch," Martin said, "take me to your people. God has sent you twice across my path. This time I shall heed the summons. I will help you and your race."

Enoch's face glowed with pleasure as he silently led the way to the hiding-place, remote from the village, in a deep thicket near the lake.

When they reached the spot, Enoch gave a peculiar cry, which was answered from the bushes. Black faces emerged from the shadows.

The boat they had come in—the skiff of a fisherman on the lower Hudson—was drawn up on the shore and turned over, forming a shelter. It was covered so thickly with boughs that only an experienced woodsman could have detected it.

Martin and Enoch worked their way among the tangle of undergrowth. Three creatures — two men and a woman—had crawled from under the boat and were crouched on the ground. They were ragged, dirty, unkempt, and repulsive. Their feet and hands were sore and swollen. Through the holes in their clothing could be seen ridges of flesh, where the whip and the branding-iron had left indelible marks. a Big Lie

Enoch spoke to them, and they responded, dully.

Sick at heart, Martin turned away. He could find no words of consolation for these miserable creatures. Enoch followed him to the cleared space.

"Who is the woman?" Martin asked.

"She's mah gal, sah."

"Your daughter?"

"Dat's what I reckon I'd call her if I was white, sah."

Martin walked up and down the beach, with his hands clasped behind him. Suddenly he stopped, a look of conviction on his face—his mind made up.

"Enoch," he said, "you will stay here to-day?"

"Yas, sah."

"I will come at sundown and bring you food, and perhaps some clothes for your daughter."

"We need blankets mo'n food. We can fish—an' de Lo'd tells us whar de co'n an' taters is."

Martin walked rapidly away, but from a rise of ground he looked back. He saw Enoch sitting just outside the bushes, his head bowed on his knees.

"And this is Enoch!" Martin said aloud. "This is the man who was so proud to lay out the fine clothes for the master of Elmhurst, and to serve that old Madeira! This is the man I taught to read and write! This is the man who saved my life at the rollway! And I am the same Martin Brook, a minister of God, who was just now pleading for a greater field. The field is *here!* Enoch's voice is the voice of one crying in the wilderness. God has heard and answered my prayer!"

Chapter IV

"MR. BROOK, breakfast's ready," Mrs. Dalton called up the stairway to Martin, as he sat in his room after his return from his interview with Enoch. Her voice startled him and he sprang out of his chair. He had not thought of going to bed on reaching home. He had refreshed his tired body with a cold dash and a vigorous rub—the only means of bathing in that primitive place—and had dropped into his chair from force of habit. He realized now that he must have dozed.

"Yes," he called back, "I am coming," and went down to the little room that served a general purpose—dining-room, living-room, and parlor.

Mrs. Dalton, who was not a Methodist, but a widow of irreproachable repute, and who had shown such liberality in taking him as a boarder, at a very moderate compensation, scrutinized him sharply, over her silver-bowed glasses, as he took his seat at the table.

Her steady gaze annoyed him. The purple ribbons in her cap; the spotless check gingham apron that covered her prim print dress; the searching black eyes and smooth black hair, streaked with gray; the thin, high-boned features, seemed to him an endless army of interrogation points, struggling through a maze of maternal solicitude.

Martin caught a reflection of his haggard face in a looking-glass on the wall opposite to him. There were dark hollows under his eyes. He forced himself to appear at ease, and show a relish for the buttered toast and fresh eggs Mrs. Dalton persisted he should eat.

"You must ha' got up pretty early this morning," she said, as she poured his coffee. "I heard you come in, and I couldn't imagine what the matter was."

"I didn't rest well last night," Martin said, evasively. "I took an early walk."

"Well, you look real peaked. Ain't you feelin' well? I guess you need some more boneset tea. I'll steep you a dose or two, so's you can take it the first thing in the morning."

"Thank you," Martin said, briefly. He felt that he must divert that gaze. "There is so much suffering in the world," he said, stirring his coffee slowly. "I found a case last—that is, recently, of absolute destitution. I though perhaps you would be able and willing to furnish an old dress or some cast-off clothing. Anything would be acceptable—especially a blanket."

"Lan's sake! a dress? 'Tain't them shiftless Skinners, I hope. They allus do appeal so to strangers," she said, chewing noisily on her toast.

"No; it's quite another case," he replied, wearily.

"Well, I hain't got no blankets to spare, but maybe there's sumpin up overhead in the wood-shed. It's a woman, eh? I'll see if I can't scare up sumpin. Where's she live? You want *me* to take the things to her, I s'pose?" She twisted her head and looked over her glasses in a flutter at a new bit of gossip.

"No," Martin said, quickly. "I will see the person myself. I shall walk over to—the vicinity later in the day."

"Oh," said Mrs. Dalton, filling the exclamation with disapproval.

He left his breakfast half eaten and went up stairs.

"Well, I declare to gracious!" the good woman mused, "if that don't beat all! That man is nigh workin' himself to death." She drummed with her teaspoon. "Now, I wonder who on earth that woman can be!

I hope she ain't got no *hold* on him—" She paused, breathless, at the unutterable speculation.

Martin seated himself at his study table and tried to resume interest in the doctrinal sermon he was writing before Mary's letter was received. But he could not. For some time he remained idle.

"Why do I hesitate to tell Mrs. Dalton the truth?" he asked himself. "Why do I fear to go openly to any one of my church members and tell him of the fugitives and their need of aid? Because of the Law! The law makes this an offence, and public sentiment is as strong against anti-slavery men here as it is in the South. No one would help me, but every one would try to capture Enoch and give him up."

Mrs. Dalton's strident voice came to him from below, interrupting his thoughts.

"Mr. Brook! Mr. Brook! They's a man here wants to see you."

Martin got up, irritated at the interruption. His head throbbed. He felt that he simply could not face one of his church members, who had probably come to talk over some petty trouble in the society. The insignificance of his church work appeared once more, as he forced himself to respond to the call.

"Yes," said Martin. "I hear you." He dragged his weary feet down the narrow stairs and stopped on the lower step, to gather nervous strength. Mrs. Dalton held back the door while he waited and leaned towards him.

"It's some stranger," she whispered. "I got them things you spoke of. They ain't so very nice, but I guess they're good enough for them beggars—beggars mustn't be choosers. I found one old blanket—moths been in it, but I guess it'll answer. He's out on the porch—wouldn't come in."

Martin crossed the little room, where the pungent odor of steeping herbs assailed him. Mrs. Dalton let the door slam shut of its own gravity, and stood wiping her hands on her apron.

"Thank you," Martin said, with a sigh. As he went to the porch, Mrs. Dalton hurried up to the window and pulled the green paper shade aside to get a glimpse of his meeting with the stranger.

"Seems to *me* I've seen him somewhars," she said. "Can't be one of them—" She listened.

"Mr. Brook?" the man asked.

"Yes, sir. You have an advantage, Mr.—?"

"Chichester, of Troy."

Martin drew back, with an almost superstitious dread at the mention of this name.

"Will you walk in?" he said, recovering his self-possession. "I am pleased to meet you."

"No—o," Mr. Chichester replied, wiping his forehead, and fanning himself with his Panama hat. "This hot weather rather catches me between wind and water." He laughed—a jolly, infectious laugh. Martin smiled. He noted the stalwart figure of the man; a sandy-haired blond, with keen blue eyes, rosy round cheeks, full lips, large mouth and even white teeth—evidently a good judge of eatables. His hands showed that he was accustomed to driving without gloves. His light summer clothes were of expensive materials, but cut for comfort. He defied the conventions in the matter of a scarf. Martin noticed this particularly, and envied his freedom from the high stock that a clergyman must wear. A worldly man—Martin saw all this at a glance —but a clean, clear-cut man, of pronounced views and apparent success.

"Why can't we sit here under the trees?" Chichester suggested. "It's pretty warm in the house to-day and there is a little breeze out here."

Martin smiled. The man's self-assertive manner was unlike that of the customary caller, who usually seemed in awe of the preacher.

Mrs. Dalton let the curtain fall as the men passed from her view. "What on earth can *he* want?" she said.

"And I'm glad to meet you again, Mr. Brook," Chichester declared, heartily, sitting down on a bench in the shade and compelling Martin by a mere gesture to join him. "Say, have you forgotten our first meeting?"

"No," Martin said, with a dignified smile. "I could scarcely forget that incident."

"Incident? It was one of the prettiest fights I ever saw. You taught me a trick or two. I tried it myself, and won a reputation on my street."

"I am sorry," Martin said, dryly, "if I gave you instructions in such matters."

"You needn't be," Chichester exclaimed. "It's an art to be cultivated. Oh, of course, a minister can't go around looking for a fight; but in my line of business, it comes in handy—wool-trade, you know. Warehousemen and roustabouts sometimes get too talkative. We're down on the wharf and often the men get pretty rough."

"Yes," said Martin, quietly. "I know the location."

"I'm out in the country a good deal now, since father's death—"

"Your father is dead?"

"Yes, dear old man. I'm the firm now. Just drove down from Burlington. Over on the other side of the lake—Keeseville—I met one of your friends. Miss Whittaker—a fine woman that. Her uncle buys for me. Crop's not first-class. If I wasn't a confirmed old bach, I tell you, that young lady would be about—"

"Miss Whittaker wrote me that you were there."

"Did she? She spoke mighty well of you—everybody does. I'm glad you're making a reputation—with your head, not your fists." He burst into a hearty laugh.

Martin remained silent.

"Ever think of going to Troy?" Chichester went on. "You ought to be in a bigger field. This ain't the place for you. I had a talk with Bishop Hedding—grand old man—and he's your friend. Better get his ear next spring and have him send you to Troy." Chichester's face disappeared behind a bandanna as he wiped his forehead.

Martin drew a deep breath. "I never seek an appointment," he said.

"What?" Chichester cried, with his handkerchief poised in the air. "You're wrong. Everybody has to — or get sent to the wilderness. I ain't a Methodist — father was, and I hang to the old church—but I tell you politics rule, in Conference and out of it."

"I am not a politician," Martin observed.

"Neither am I," Chichester laughed. "I ain't much of anything from my shoulders up; but I like a good sermon, and I want to see the brains of our Conference come to the front. Let me give you a lift. I'm chockful of business, when I get started."

"You were recently at Keeseville?" Martin asked, evading the question.

"Yes—quiet town. Nice people. They have heard of you as a man should be heard of. See, what's that line of poetry, 'Golden opinions,' you know? Never could keep that sort of thing in my head. Good idea, though. Well, I'll tell you—" He glanced about him and lowered his voice. "I heard what you did down there at Sandy Hill some years ago, with that fugitive slave. Miss Whittaker told me. You're just the man for a prominent place. Ever give that subject much of a thought?" Chichester bent forward confidentially.

"What subject?" Martin asked, meeting the look with disfavor. "I have often thought of my former life, before my career was determined on. I have no regrets."

"Yes, I know. But—" Chichester closed his eyes to a narrow slit and studied Martin. "That other matter—the slavery question, you know?"

"Yes, I have given it a great deal of thought," Martin said, frankly and firmly. "Why?"

"Oh," said Chichester, "that's good. I might have known that—after all your experience with—with the judge, and so forth, and what you did for that negro—and all you lost by it—of course you have. You couldn't help it. I'll be—switched if I don't admire you. Say, did you ever hear from that man again?"

Martin met his gaze squarely.

"Mr. Chichester," he said, and he was amazed how closely his voice resembled Enoch's tone, "I saw a black man last—recently—who said he had received help from you."

"Enoch?"

"Yes."

"When?" the word was in a whisper.

"Last night. Those people are still here."

"Is that so?" Chichester mused. "I thought they'd be in Canada by this time." Then more earnestly: "You helped them, too?"

"I shall to-night."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that." After a moment's pause, and taking several pieces of money from his pocket: "I won't try to see him. Might attract attention—a stranger. Give this to the old man, and tell him he can write to me when he needs a little help. He's honest—he's all right. He knows how to read and write. He said you taught him. You know that's against the laws down South, of course, and that it's objected to by the good Northern Christians?" He watched Martin.

"I am not acquainted with the laws of all the States," he replied, resenting the last clause.

"Well, you had better look into them, and learn about the treatment of the blacks. I guess that will stir your fighting blood."

"I think it has been stirred," Martin said, as he thrust the coins into his pocket. His fingers touched the copper token, which he had forgotten, and he drew it out.

"I thank you for your thoughtfulness of Enoch," he said. "Do you know what this means?" He held up the copper token.

Chichester gave a glance at the token and looked eagerly into Martin's face, at the same time making a sign: he laid the fingers of his right hand over the fingers of his left, and then quickly lifted them. Martin paid no heed to the signal—it was a mere gesture to him. Chichester scowled. "Where did you get that?" he said, sharply.

"Enoch gave it to me last night. He said it was a ticket on the 'Underground road,' and when I asked him what he meant, he said Charles Chichester, of Troy, could tell me. What is the 'Underground road'?"

Chichester was silent. He drummed on the crown of his hat with his fingers, and sat lost in thought. Finally he said:

"Why do you help that old man? Why did you give up your chances with Judge Northcote for him?"

"That question is a broad one. I may not be able to answer it in a single sentence. Enoch once did me a great service, but that was not the cause. There is a principle involved which I did not fully understand at that moment—an application of the principle of abstract justice, which I shall hereafter devote my life to comprehending."

"Because you hated slavery?" Chichester asked.

Martin glanced up quickly. "Yes. Do *you* hate slavery?"

"Hate it?" said Chichester. "With all my soul!"

"With all my soul!" Martin replied.

"Good!" cried Chichester. "There is a practical work for such a man as you, Mr. Brook."

"Yes," Martin assented, "and we must make it practicable, as well."

"Here we have the case in a nutshell," Chichester went on; "the laws uphold slavery. I believe in saving bodies, as well as souls. The Constitution commands the surrender of slaves and—and *apprentices* who escape from tyranny into another State. I believe *you* were an indentured bound-boy at one time. Is that so?"

"Yes, that is true," Martin said.

"Well, we are growing more considerate of white boys, but in some of the free States, like Illinois, anti-slavery meetings to help the blacks are prohibited by statute. We are denied the right of free speech and free press. Here in our State, public sentiment rules, and we who oppose slavery are under a ban. Would you dare to ask your Christian church members for help in getting old Enoch on to Canada? We boast of our release from the oppression of England, and yet our people are proscribed from sending our slaves from these boasted States into British territory for freedom. I tell you, our Declaration is a lie and our Constitution a fraud!"

"That is strong language," Martin said.

"Can you refute it? The churches, too. Now, they claim to teach Christ and Him crucified, but I tell you, such a profession of religion is a sham. I have refused to join your church just because it upholds a living lie!"

"Pardon me if I decline to listen to such statements," Martin declared, rising, the churchman in him asserting itself, but Chichester pulled him back.

"Come, let's be sensible and get our feet on the ground. I beg your pardon. You asked about that token. It is something new. We had to have an evidence of the honesty of the ignorant slaves who are escaping. They are forbidden by law to learn to read or write. Many of our own people, too, are ignorant. We required something easily hidden on the person and not very noticeable in itself. So we had a limited number of these tokens moulded. It looks like a coin. It is not milled on the edge. The legend is: 'United States of America.' Here is the laurel wreath, symbol of integrity, and the motto, 'Liberty, 1837.' Turn it over. The figure of a woman, kneeling and in shackles, with hands raised appealingly, her face turned to implore sympathy. She is encircled by the inscription, 'Am I not a Woman and a Sister?'"

Martin saw, in his mind's eye, the woman under the boat—Enoch's daughter. Was she his sister in Christ, recognized as such by the Christian world? He saw the force of Chichester's term, "sham."

"Mr. Brook, I believe I can trust you," Chichester affirmed. "Besides, doing as you have already done, in helping Enoch, you are under the ban of the law. I could give you up, if so disposed, and subject you to severe punishment."

"You can trust me, sir, without threats," Martin replied.

"I meant no threat, but simply a statement of fact. Let me explain. There is an oath-bound and effective organization, extending from the South to the Canada line, especially strong in Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, with members in New York, known as the 'Underground Railroad,' in satire of the new system of transportation. Fugitive slaves are received at the 'stations,' on farms mostly, for we try to avoid large cities, and are sent on by night in every conceivable disguise—under loads of hay or sacks of grain, or headed up in barrels—and kept in seclusion during the day. We hide them so as to defy search. When the leader hands out this token, we are bound to help the man or bands along to the next station. There are several routes. My home is a station. I get the runaways up through the river and canal to Whitehall. I helped Enoch—the man who saved your life. This is all a legal crime. I am liable to arrest, at least to civil action by the courts. Will you give me up to the law?"

Chichester held out his hand. Martin grasped it.

"No," he said.

"Will you come down and join our society?"

"I do not see my way clear to do that at present," Martin said. "I shall not join any oath-bound organization. It is against my principles."

"But we must meet our enemy in that way until we are stronger," Chichester argued.

"I will help you, depend upon that. If you cannot trust my word, my oath is valueless. But, Mr. Chichester, you have raised a very serious question in my mind—that of the law. I have naturally a reverence for law. My vows as a minister imply that; and I must do now what I once hoped to do professionally: make a careful study of the law as it exists in all of the States."

"Do so," said Chichester, "and you'll become an abolitionist."

"I shall leave the result with God."

"Very well. Anyhow, I shall trust you. Think on this subject—study the Southern laws and notice how completely the North is ruled by the slavery question. I must be going now."

Mr. Chichester shook Martin's hand. "Good-bye, and remember this is in confidence. I rely on you fully."

"What we have said is in confidence, sir," Martin said, warmly. "Good-bye. I hope we may meet in the near future."

He watched the stranger, who had come again into his life at such a furious pace, saw him climb into the wagon and drive off, and then walked slowly to the house.

Mrs. Dalton met him in the doorway. "Had quite a talk, didn't ye? Is your friend a city man? He looks like one—so spry like. I was just goin' to ask him to stop to dinner."

"I don't think he would have remained," Martin replied.

"Is he a Methodist? He don't look much like a *preacher!*" she ventured.

"He is a Methodist by birth," Martin said, coldly. His reserve silenced her, but failed to satisfy her curiosity. Nor did he try to do so. He kept his room during the day, except for a brief dinner, despite the heat, writing—at least, so Mrs. Dalton thought, as she listened at the crack of the stair door. He had not asked for "the things" after all, and she was "half a mind to put them back again."

But after tea, he said: "If you please, I will take that bundle now."

She brought it and he started out to the street. He saw that she was watching him, and he acted another lie: he turned in the opposite direction, making a wide circuit of the town.

He seemed to himself a criminal; but to Enoch, as he told of Chichester's visit and gave him the money and the bundle, he seemed a minister of good.

The fugitives were ready to start when he reached the lake. He saw the little boat go tossing out into the dark, and heard that penetrating voice come back, as he knelt upon the sands:

"Gawd bless you, Marse Martin!"

Chapter V

THE keen ear of the excellent Mrs. Dalton had not deceived her: it seldom did when disposed in the vicinity of an open doorway. Martin had spent that summer afternoon writing.

But not writing a sermon. Although it was Thursday, and only one sermon was on paper, he devoted the greater part of his time to letters. One of these was to Mary Whittaker. He carefully read it over before sealing it:

"MY DEAR FRIEND MARY,—I have this day seen and talked freely with the Mr. Charles Chichester of whom you spoke in your recent letter. He impressed me as a worldly man; but, like you, I believe he is honest and sincere. I am inclined to add that I regard him, also, as a generous man, free with his money. Probably he does not have to give quite so close heed to temporal affairs as some of us do; but I trust he will make proper use of his opportunities. He introduced a topic, the details of which I am not at liberty to divulge, which has set me to thinking of an old theme in a new way. I fear we are living in a troublous period, and that the Lord will visit upon us His great wrath for our many shortcomings. I feel that I have been negligent and blind. I am determined now to settle a question of vital importance.

"Mr. Chichester alluded to you in a very cordial and most approving way. It did me good to learn, from the lips of a stranger, of the esteem in which you are held for your numerous virtues; although one brief allusion to his own regard for you touched me strangely. May I ask, as a friend of long standing, if he has ever spoken to you of his domestic situation?

"Your letter, for which I thank you, awakened a train of memories, some of which are, as you can readily imagine, extremely painful; while others are most tenderly valued. But do not regard this as a rebuke. You are always gentle and considerate of others.

"I am contemplating a few days' visit to Keeseville. Although this may seem irrelevant, it truly is not so; for while I shall doubtless enjoy seeing my friends—among whom you hold a foremost place—I have in thought another purpose. You know my own library is very limited. The new subject I wish to investigate and advise myself upon necessitates considerable reading, both of history and the law, and this village has an inadequate supply of such books, but I think I can find them in Keeseville.

"I am deeply pained to learn of the illness of Mrs. Wright. I have ventured to request permission to visit her, and shall await reply from Judge Northcote, before asking my official board for a leave of absence from my charge in this place. Perhaps I may be able to go from K. to Sandy Hill, stopping a day or two at Troy. Mr. Chichester kindly invited me to call on him. He may be able to assist me in my new studies.

"I hope for your material and spiritual welfare. There is but one Source of strength in time of trouble. I am glad if I was the agent that turned your mind to Methodism. Your allusion to the influence of my poor sermons is profoundly appreciated. Sincerely, and with great respect, your friend,

"MARTIN BROOK."

The letter he wrote to Sandy Hill was much shorter:

"*Judge George Northcote*:

"DEAR SIR,—I have learned, with profound regret, of the illness of Mrs. Wright. Will you grant me the favor of a few hours' conversation with yourself on a question of law, and also a short visit with her? Respectfully, your obt. servant,

"MARTIN BROOK."

As he sat reading these letters over, the need of books and documents not now within his reach became more and more apparent to him. The subject of American slavery was one that could not be treated as a doctrinal theme in polemics. It was a practical, political, and moral fact, not a theory. His data must be exact. The few books on his shelves were exclusively theological, Methodistic, and valueless for his new purpose. Because of this, his mind turned to the larger village of Keeseville, where he believed he could find law-books, and also men's opinions on the legal aspects of the case.

"Oh," he lamented, "if I could have access to the Elmhurst library now, how much it would aid me." And with this thought in mind, he wrote as he did to Judge Northcote, hoping that time had softened the asperity of the judge's feelings towards him. It was the first letter he had addressed to his former patron since leaving Elmhurst, and he wrote now, as a man to a man. But at the same time he felt a desire to see little mother — the dear woman he loved so tenderly. Her illness was, he thought, a sufficient excuse to justify the letter, although he admitted to himself that the underlying motive was his wish to argue with the judge the vital issue of the legality and justice of this one great question—a question so vast that it dwarfed all sentiment of a personal nature. It aspired to meet the keen intellect of the judge in the freedom of debate.

While awaiting an answer from Judge Northcote, Martin exhausted the small libraries in the village, and turned to the Bible, and such commentaries as he had, for proof to refute the strongest and most popular argument—the argument that slavery was divinely sanctioned.

Mary wrote him that she was glad to hear of his intended visit; but no answer came from Northcote. Several days went by. At last, the postmaster handed him a letter and winked wisely over his horn spectacles at the loungers about him:

"Have to write to yourself, eh?" the postmaster said. "Well, there's postage due on this one."

Martin paid the postage, thrust the letter into his pocket and hurried home. He recognized his own message to Northcote; the superscription marked out with a single stroke, and his name and address written in the judge's firm, fine hand. His request to see a dying woman—little mother—was returned unopened.

In the first bitterness of his chagrin he rebelled at this added insult. He blamed the unconscious cause of his anger—Enoch—for all of his troubles, and flung aside the books he was reading. But as he sat, late into the night, reviewing cause and effect, a clearer vision dawned for him. Enoch was, after all, but the visible instrument; the motive lay still deeper and was more potent.

Slavery, and slavery alone, as an abstract and impersonal institution, was accountable for all this suffering! It had induced the conditions which had led up to Enoch's secret sojourn at Elmhurst; and to his own expulsion from home. It had made Enoch a skulker in the night, and he himself a violator of the law in aiding this fleeing slave on to "God's country." It had finally brought to him the disgrace of this returned letter—had deprived him of the privilege of seeing a dying friend; for, in the mortification of the refusal, he lost sight of the real purpose of his request.

The individuality of slavery was brought home to him.

If slavery could so affect him here, in this far-away place, what must it be to those who lived under its immediate influence!

It was indeed a subject to be studied—an evil to be eradicated.

Martin resumed his self-imposed task more earnestly, He secured a leave of absence from his pastorate by effecting an exchange of pulpits with the preacher at Keeseville. He arranged for one week's visit, but his stay there was prolonged beyond the Sunday provided for at the start. To his surprise, as he proceeded with his work, he found a fund of information that required more painstaking research than even a fortnight could compass. Lawyers permitted him to read their books, while in the libraries of the principal citizens, he discovered essays and opinions that opened to him a vast field for thought. And all this was done without explanation of his real purpose; but at the conclusion of his labors, he was conscious of one serious deficiency—a lack of argument by the anti-slavery people to the specific end. He had obtained historical and legal data, but not the statements in opposition. He knew that such a presentment did exist, for he had seen it at Elmhurst, but he was unable to find it here.

He had called on Mary at her uncle's house; but in his absorption in the theme of slavery, he still remained outside of the area of her personality. She pleased him, yet did not awaken a sentiment beyond an indefinable appreciation of her restful presence.

He realized that there were bonds of sympathy between them—ties that bound them alike to an interest in Sandy Hill. He found that it was impossible to loosen the hold the child-heart had taken on the environment of those first years of their acquaintance; and the most curious phase of this psychological condition was that the incidents, like the childish minds that noted them in those early days, though trivial and unessential, preserved their relative proportions to subsequent events. They seemed important then; they remained humorously important now.

"When we cease to be children, we may put aside childish things," Martin said, "but we cannot put away the memory of them or the association of ideas."

After these many years—years that had brought vital changes to him, with agonizings and trials that lifted him to the plane of spiritual adviser to hundreds; years that had brought to her the great change wrought by her father's death—the first subject spoken of in confidence between them was suggested, not by his great work, but by a big yellow cat lying on the hearth-rug.

"Why, he looks like my old Yellow Fellow, Mary," Martin said. "Do you remember how you used to dress him up in cap and ruffles, and how the dogs frightened him into the tree the first time I saw you?"

The tension of emotion was instantly relieved. "And you played with him like a baby. How much Mrs. Wright used to think of that cat! Those were great days, if we had only known how to enjoy them. You used to come to Elmhurst almost every day. And do you remember Mrs. Coulter's big white rabbits! How I envied her! I never could get Eph to tolerate rabbits. Do you remember Zeus and Juno? How you used to try to hitch them up and they wouldn't go together—they were so full of life?"

Mary smiled. "Yes, Mr. Coulter is a Doctor of Divinity now. He is rector of a church in Albany. Mrs. Coulter came into a very large inheritance from her father. I don't think she cares for rabbits."

"I have lost track of Eph Larrabee entirely," Martin said, scarcely heeding the news of the Coulters. "In fact, I fear that my wandering duties have made me somewhat forgetful of most of my old friends." He sighed—he had a way of sighing, as though the world rested on his shoulders and squeezed the breath out of him.

Mary looked at him, with a fleeting glance of inquiry and concern. "Aren't you well, Martin? You sigh as if—"

"Oh, nothing—nothing," he said, half humorously. "That is what a clever woman once called my 'ministerial proclamation.' And, do you know, I am always afraid of a clever woman. Such a person provokes me to levity; and my two besetting sins are the extremes of levity and despondency."

"Father would have called that an expression of nervous overtax—in a woman," she added, quickly. "You always were too strongly emotional—"

"Don't say that, Mary!" lifting his hand. "If you knew how I have fought emotionalism you wouldn't charge me with so complete a failure." He moved around the room with hands clasped behind him. "Your father did not suffer long nor severely?"

"No." The light of love softened her eyes. "He fell asleep, after a hard day's ride and a trying case, as he lay on the sitting-room couch, while I was reading to him."

A silence came upon them like the hush of those who listen for a welcome voice.

The work Martin was now doing took him, for the first time since entering the church, among men of the world not his own religionists. He began to see affairs from a wider point of view.

"Mary," he said, the Thursday evening of the second week, "I never missed the opportunities of Elmhurst as I do at this moment. I didn't know the value of that library, while I had access to it. If I could be there now, I would make better use of it. The more I think of what I gave up in leaving that place, the vaster the sacrifice seems to me."

"It was a sacrifice, Martin, in the truest sense. You gave up everything to God," she said, calmly. "Do you regret that act?"

Martin colored under her steady gaze. He had not used the term as she construed it in her high conception of his motive. He perceived that she had idealized him, and he despised and rejected the moral cowardice of allowing her to believe him worthy of this great praise.

But he faced the unexpected ordeal with the courage of true sacrifice—the possible loss of her esteem.

"I don't deserve your good opinion of me, Mary," he said, "and I am glad you uttered a half-doubt. That makes it easier for me to speak as I must. I do not regret entering the ministry. I can say that much in all sincerity; but you misunderstand the immediate cause of my first awakening."

"It was the change in your prospects caused by your defence of a helpless man that made you take up the ministry," she said, stoutly.

"Indirectly, yes; but not directly. I did not give up those prospects with a thought of the Methodist ministry in my mind. I was moved to act from emotion at first, and later on by a rational conviction of a principle I could not solve. Besides, I fancied then that the world was open to me. It was not until I was impressed by adverse conditions that I decided to become a preacher." He stood before her, with his hand extended in a pleading gesture.

"God's ways are strange. They lead us through adversity to the right path," she remarked.

"Oh, you blessed friend!" he said, with tears in his eyes. "You give me a new thought." Then, after a moment's pause: "Perhaps I am being led now," he said. "Surely the way is rough." He walked up and down the room several times before he spoke again.

"What is it, Martin?" she said, softly.

"You still have faith in me?"

"Yes," she said, but her own heart's plea, because of her love for him, caused her to seem reserved and cold.

He paused before her a moment, hesitated in his speech and turned away, with a feeling that she had repelled him. When he approached her again he said in a matter-of-fact tone: "The regret I feel is in losing the opportunity to use Judge Northcote's library. I went out from that place, it is true, because of the condition of Enoch and his race—let us call that the unseen ruling principle. To-day I am crippled in my capacity to do for him as I would by a lack of a certain form of information contained in that library, which is difficult to obtain. I know it is there; but in those days I did not comprehend its meaning. I have in this way lessened my power to help Enoch's race."

"Lessened your power? No; your power is within yourself—the loss is transient opportunity, and can be remedied," she said.

"It was like a soldier breaking his sword on the altar of Mars—a devotional action, but a disarmament of himself," he exclaimed, "although I cannot justify myself with the consolation of intentional virtue; for, although I am a minister of the Gospel now, I first hoped to become a lawyer—a man like Judge Northcote, with a knowledge of the law, but a more just application of its spirit. I failed to gain a place at the bar, and was obliged to accept the pulpit as my field. Now, however, I lack the materials for information which Northcote has at Elmhurst." He spoke almost bitterly.

"Why don't you go to the judge—"

"Go to him? Go after he sent back my—" He checked himself.

"Yes?" Mary prompted.

"Why, I wrote the judge, asking permission to visit Mrs. Wright. Your letter telling of her illness—" He broke down; his point was weakly taken, and he saw it. Mary seemed able to search his very soul with those calm eyes.

"You wrote to the judge," she said, "with a secret motive? Wasn't this done after you admitted to yourself the need of the library?" she asked, with a smile of gentle reproof.

"Yes," Martin admitted, sitting by the fireplace. "You are right. I had been debating the need of more materials for study before I wrote him. But my punishment was as great as my motive was unconsciously mean. And, besides, even you will concede that I do love little mother."

"Why didn't you go boldly to Elmhurst, and speak in the name of love? If that had been your only motive—no other thought behind it, even a selfish desire to do good—you wouldn't have written. You would have gone. Love's first thought is to fly to the one beloved where there is a call."

"Mary," Martin said, earnestly, "I wish I had your power of self-analysis, and your moral courage in acting for the right."

"You have something more valuable than anything I possess. You are a man—you can act; I am only a woman." She smiled sadly, and checked him in an impulsive speech she saw he was about to utter. "No. The chief trouble with you lies in your introspection and supersensitiveness. You have aggressiveness, and yet you shrink from a blow; you have perception, but you do not always observe proportions. You do not lack moral courage. Pardon me if I offend you by saying that you have too much egotism."

He frowned.

"I see that I have offended you, Martin. Believe me, I did not intend to hurt you; but you stand in your own light. It would be better for you if you had some of Mr. Chichester's characteristics."

"Mary!" Martin said, reprovingly, rising to his feet. "That man is a worldly person—he is not a professor of religion. He spoke to me of you in a manner—"

"Please don't mistake my meaning. Sit down." Martin obeyed her. "Mr. Chichester is not religious, but he is a good man. Sometimes I think we overvalue religious professions—and undervalue the true morality of men.

"You appear to know him. I do not," he said, gravely. "There is a vast difference between morality and religious integrity."

"I have met him only a few times, but I can read character," she said, avoiding discussion. "Tell me more of your interview with him. Let us speak of facts."

Martin rose once more and moved about uneasily.

"He succeeded in unsettling me most effectually, for one thing. I am here now trying to reach some conclusion on a question he raised."

"A religious question? That can scarcely be," she said, smiling. "You have not told me the nature of your studies here. I am not intrusive, but cannot I help you?"

"No—and yes. It is an ethical question rather than religious. It impinges on our ideas of morality. In fact, it is the question of slavery."

"Indeed! Why haven't you done this sooner?"

"My duty seemed to be to the Church. I own now that I have mistaken my duty to my country and to God."

"You know my father made that question a study."

"I wish he were here now," Martin declared. "He could help me."

"Why, I have all his books and papers. I have—"

"What! Here?" Martin asked, quickly.

"Yes. And since his death, knowing how highly he prized them, I have arranged them carefully. They cover the subject fully. Would you like to see them?"

"Indeed I would, for they are probably the very documents I have been trying to find—the ones I alluded to as being at Elmhurst. I thought I should have to go to Troy or Albany for them. Let me go through them here with you," he suggested.

"If you wish to—yes," she said, and went to her room to get the papers. On her return she remarked, "I may be able to assist you. It was fortunate you mentioned the matter."

"But I didn't do it, Mary," he said, impulsively. "It was you who brought the subject up. It is always you who do the right thing—the helpful thing—"

"When I call you egotistic, and offend you?"

"I wish you'd call me a fool, Mary! I believe you could do even that and make it sound like praise," he said, hurriedly examining the package.

"It is not for me to praise or to blame," she said, watching his eager face as he bent over the papers. "I try to do some little kindly acts as I go on, but if you only knew—" She turned her face away; he was not thinking of her. The broken sentence at last reached his consciousness, with a literal purport—he was seeking knowledge.

"If I only knew—what, Mary?" he asked, glancing up, his mind absorbed in the new discovery.

"How glad I shall be to assist you in going over father's papers!" she answered, with a smile.

Chapter VI

THE most casual reading of Dr. Whittaker's papers convinced Martin that here, under his hand, lay the material required to complete his investigations. The ethical and historical aspects of the question of American slavery were here presented, from the view-point of an American abolitionist.

"There is too much data here to permit of our going through it to-night," Martin said. "To-morrow morning—"

"To-morrow is a school-day," Mary said. "But in the evening and Saturday I shall have leisure."

"May I take the papers to the inn? I'll be careful of them." He tied them up and said good-night.

She lighted him along the dark hall and held the candle high as he went down the stoop. "Be careful on that step—don't fall, Martin. Good-night."

In the morning he met her as she was coming out of her uncle's yard on her way to school. Her plain black dress, her simple black bonnet tied under her chin with black ribbons, made her slender figure seem more delicate than ever.

"Mary," he said, "I have spent the night reading those papers and am trying to quiet my brain with a breath of this clear air. May I walk with you?"

As they moved along the street, she noticed the look of curiosity on the faces of those village people they chanced to pass, and who turned to watch the enthusiastic stranger.

"Yes," she said, timidly.

"I never saw such a woman as you, Mary. You've left nothing for me to do. You've classified those records—"

He spoke louder than he realized. She interposed quietly, for the school-children were, as usual, running to meet her, and were showing their surprise at the sight of this man with the teacher. "I'm glad my work hasn't been wasted. Let us leave the matter until we meet to-night."

"Yes, I'll be at the house early," he said, swinging away, with uplifted hat.

That evening he was promptly at Mary's house.

"I have found a new meaning in Blackstone's definition of moral law," he said, plunging at once into the subject. "At one time, under Northcote's interpretation, I thought I comprehended his words, but last night's study throws a new light on them. And Priestley's apothegm: 'No people were ever yet found who were better than their laws, though many have been known to be worse,' is the key to the mystery. I was brought up to revere the law. That was Judge Northcote's constant lesson. He used to say that a refusal to accept established laws was emotional revolution. I think now that revolution is but an evidence of man's growth into higher laws."

"Fairer laws will be enacted as they are needed," she remarked.

"No, pardon me. The need comes first; and the first need is a clearer understanding of the divine law. The claim is made that the Bible sanctions slavery; and I, as a preacher, am justified in taking a so-called political subject into the pulpit in refutation of that falsehood. That is a point on which I and my people clash. When politicians invade my sphere with error, to further their selfish ends, I have a right to refute their assertions."

"Do not ever be afraid of men's opinions, Martin. I am surprised that you have waited so long."

"Yes, I deserve that rebuke," he said, thoughtfully. "But this is something that touches every side of my life. I can foresee the result. This proposed action dooms me to unpopularity and—and poverty; and sets me apart from men of affairs, whose favor is necessary to insure a call to the larger appointments in the Conference. But it is not that result that I shrink from. I shall be kept in loneliness. My life is very lonely. I can't help feeling this human weakness, even when I concede the call to a great duty."

"You are not yet committed to the cause," she suggested.

"Yes, I am. My conscience commits me to it." He looked soberly into the fire. "When I was a little boy I used to wonder what my mother meant by my lack of 'the acquisitive' and 'the home-building quality.' I understand her meaning now. 'My fate cries out'; but it is hard to become like the Nemean lion, when the heart is lonely; and this task imposes the effects of going counter to current opinion. I am doing this now not as I did it then, when I left Elmhurst. This is not impulsive, or vague, or untried. My intellect, not my heart alone, impels me."

"Martin," she said, "don't you know that cheerfulness makes the burdens of life *seem* lighter—that it is cheerful acceptance of duty, not resignation, God requires of us? You retard your own progress by taking a gloomy view of life. Worldly wealth is not the highest success."

"No; but wealth may be used as a means to a good end. It seems to be the will of God that I shall be a solitary man. I see my line of duty; but I sometimes feel as if I could not go on in it alone—without aid in the work, Mary. Will you help me? May I write to you frequently, and will you be frank in your suggestions?"

"Yes, willingly," she said; but her heart cried silently: "Oh, if I could always help him! If he only knew that I love him—if he only loved me—poverty would seem no barrier!"

He rose to say good-bye. "This has been a pleasant and beneficial visit, Mary. I will fight my tendency to melancholy. You have given me strength to endure the seclusion of my petty life at Shelburne. Good-bye for a time, and God bless you!"

"Good-night," she said; and the memory of her voice and the look on her face lingered long with him—long after his return to the little room in Mrs. Dalton's cottage, where, in the solitude, the grim fact of American slavery confronted him.

Slavery was no longer a theory — a speculative idea like that of salvation, holding no solution except in a mind made ethereal through religious ecstasy. It became a reality, in the realm of the demonstrable. As a commercial error, Martin easily reduced it to a mathematical certainty, and to his philosophic mind the question held great possibilities, because the proposition that slavery was a divinely ordained institution demanded a clearer understanding of Scriptural utterances.

A knowledge of Greek and Hebrew must be relied upon by him to determine which was truth or error. This fact he soon discovered, when he once more took up the original text of the Bible and worked out its meaning, with no assistance except an occasional letter to some of the few scholars in the Church. There were few, indeed, who were disposed to aid him; and at times he grew disheartened, as he became convinced that his attitude, so at variance with public sentiment, must be sustained beyond the shadow of a doubt—must be made positive enough to encounter the most scholarly opposition — or his work would utterly fail.

But in those darkest hours there was sure to come a message from Mary. Blessed friend! He rose from the reading of her letters as from his knees before the Almighty—without division of his love for God, purified as by the truth made manifest. They were always a combination of uplifting exhortation and current news. From her he learned of the death of Mrs. Wright; "little mother" had passed into a knowledge of the Infinite.

The summer passed before Martin had finished the first section of his studies of this inexhaustible theme. Winter came howling down upon the region. The lake was covered with ice, and men were crossing it in sledges.

Hard work was beginning to show its effects on his spirits, in spite of his vigorous out-door habits. He felt the lack of human sympathy. There was no one in the village to whom he could go for companionship, or with whom he could discuss his theories. His mind grew cloudy with doubts.

But in the silence he heard the voice of Mary, urging him to cheerfulness.

With this encouragement sounding in his ears, and without asking leave of absence, or telling any one of his purpose, he bundled himself in a sleigh, with a big wolf-skin coat wrapped about him, in a mass of buffalo-robes, and started across the lake. Ice and snow and wind—the buffetings of the wintry storm—were no barriers to the progress of his intention.

He found Mary—placid and serene—by the comforting fireside of the little home in Keeseville. The welcome he received scattered the gloom from his heart and filled his soul with peace.

Still, there were moments, as he explained his work, when Mary's kindly criticism cut deep into his egotism; yet, line by line, statement by statement, they reviewed his task; modifying it here, intensifying there, in true perspective; until at last he saw the value of proportions.

"Mary," he said, standing admiringly before her, "you amaze me."

"Martin, you are not doing this for the score or two of listeners in the little church at Shelburne," she said, a deeper color coming into her face. "You are preparing the way for a wider congregation—the world. It is a vital moment for you. Once taken, the step is irrevocable. You will be assailed not only by your immediate hearers, but by the press and the pro-slavery advocates in the North—by the powerful majority. You must make your position impregnable. Have you thought of all this, Martin?"

"Yes; and I have thought of more than this—of its meaning in a more personal way," he said, sadly, lapsing into the inevitable condition of mind that Mary so deplored.

In the glow of the flaring fire and the yellow candlelight, Mary seemed slight and frail, compared with Martin's sturdy form, as he sat down and fell to studying her. He could not say that she was beautiful; her charm lay in a serenity of spirit that enveloped her. She bore a close resemblance to her father, in the broad white forehead, and the full mouth, with its strong line of chin. Her well-rounded cheeks, at times like this slightly tinged with color, showed the intellectual pallor when in repose. Her dark brown hair, thick and long, with a tendency to waviness carefully repressed, was brushed smoothly down over her ears and coiled in a knot above the firm, white neck. Her eyes, he mused, were the glory of her face—large, widely set, under arched brows—a true hazel, that held the light; now almost blue, with brown flecks on the iris; now intensely black, as they revealed the force of feeling held in check by will and judgment. Her hands were small, wide in the palm, and soft of texture; her feet small and high-arched. About her was the atmosphere of spiritual exaltation.

"Can you add one more word of encouragement, Mary?" Martin said, breaking the silence. "Can you say that you believe I am sincere?"

"I believe you are sincere, Martin; but no matter what I may think, you are the one to say what your motive is, and whether or not you have the moral courage to face the hosts you are now engaging."

"Yes," he said. "I must weigh my own purpose. If I deliver that address in a pulpit, I am forever committed to the cause of human freedom. That means a minority fight with the greatest political power ever known in this nation. We are in the midst of a stupendous conflict. The action of our General Conference ten years ago, in choosing a slave-holder to represent us in the British Conference, confirms the pro-slavery sentiment in our Church. I can't look for official approval; and the country is in a state of agitation and depression. I am positive that the advocacy of anti-slavery doctrines now will make me a target for the leading political party."

"You are right. Think well, Martin. Are you convinced that God calls you to this personal sacrifice?" she asked, her hands clasped in her lap, her eyes turned up to his.

"I am convinced of it," he said, rising and lifting his head high as he walked the floor.

"Shall you carry the issue of political parties into this discussion?" her eyes now turned towards the fire.

"No," he said, pausing in his walk.

"Then you will speak only on the moral wrong of slavery?"

"That is the beginning. The Biblical and social phases of it," he explained, resuming his walk more slowly.

"I shall pray for the success of your cause."

"And for me?" he asked, coming quickly to her.

"Yes," she said, without turning her face towards him.

"Mary," he pleaded, "I cannot go on without your help. This truth grows more evident to me. You do not know how much you are to me. If I were rich—" he ceased speaking.

She still looked straight into the fire, making no reply.

"You know my life," he went on, with a sweeping gesture of both hands downward. "You know the secret of my heart. I thought I loved a woman." He paused an instant, clasped his hands before him, and resumed. "That love divided me from God, and I was made to go through the deep waters of anguish." He walked once across the room, and then stood close to her. "I have found much more than appears on these pages during our evenings here. I have found the truth through your eyes. But I am poor, and the future looks dark; God alone knows the outcome of this new work. In the face of all these conditions, which you understand as well as I do, can you love me, Mary?" He held out his hands. "I love you, and because of that love, I hesitate to ask you to share the life that must be mine."

She lifted her eyes, now deepest black, and looked thoughtfully into his. "Do you truly believe I could be helpful to you?" she asked.

"The truest helper, next to our God."

She rose and laid her hands in his. He took her gently in his arms.

"You won't weary of me?"

"Weary of you? Weary of you, dear heart? I could as soon think of wearying of prayer. With all reverence I say this, for you are my earthly strength. It seems so selfish, Mary, to ask you to be my wife, but I love you, with a love that calls for you."

She laid her head on his breast.

"I have always loved you, Martin!"

He lifted her face between his hands and looked into her eyes. "Always?" he asked, the light breaking in on him with a sudden pang.

"Always," she answered, softly.

Chapter VII

MARTIN went back to Shelburne nerved to his great endeavor.

Mary and he chose the day and hour for the delivery of his first sermon in the cause of human freedom.

"I shall think of you, dear heart," she said, at parting with him, "and I will be there in spirit."

"Yes," he said. "I don't shrink from what will result to me in this duty, but only from what must come to you. Are you sure, Mary, you understand? I will release you—I'll go on, now that I know you love me—"

"I understand, Martin," she said, and kissed him.

And urged on by this conception of duty, and Mary's love, Martin faced a norther as he tramped through the snow-drifts towards the little church, that fateful Sunday morning.

He entered the vestibule and shook the snow from his cloak. He overheard one good sister say to another:

"Well, I expect I hadn't orter tried to come out such a day as this, with my rheumatism and all."

"No, 'tain't likely you'll get paid for it, 'ceptin' in aches."

The words chilled him.

The small groups about the red-hot stoves, in the lower corners of the bleak church, made way for him to come nearer the fire.

"Better git warm first," a leading member advised.

"Thank you," Martin replied, absently, and went on up the main aisle to the pulpit.

"He seems kinder put out about sumpthin'," a sister whispered.

"Well, this weather's enough to make anybody feel put out. My feet's like ice."

Martin looked at his open-faced silver watch. It lacked some minutes of meeting-time. He sat down on the cold hair-cloth pulpit sofa and covered his face with his hands, trying to forget the scene about him: the whitewashed walls, the plain pews, the uncarpeted aisles, the frost-coated windows.

The church-members were coming in by twos and threes, noisily stamping the snow from their heavy boots in the vestibule and gathering about the stoves. Their voices were repressed to penetrating whispers.

Martin reached forward, took the hymn-book from the pulpit, and turned the leaves with benumbed fingers. The throbbing of fever was in his head, the chill of death in his hands and feet. He laid the book back on the desk, open at the first selection, rubbed his hands together, and drew the Bible down on his knees to find the place of his text.

Still the people did not take their seats; they lingered around the stoves, casting glances at the preacher, in resentment of his implied suggestion that it was time to begin.

A new-comer burst into the church, bringing a blast of cold wind with him. He rubbed his ears and spatted his hands.

"Never see it blow much harder, comin' over the hill!" he exclaimed, aloud. "Cold, ain't it?" he said to a deaf old woman.

"Eh?" she replied. "No, thank Gawd! I hain't had none so far this year, but I guess I shall have, comin' out in this storm."

A boy tittered aloud.

Some of the leading members conferred together.

"I guess I'll go up to Brother Brook and tell him he'd just better hold a prayer-meetin' and dismiss us," one said. The words reached Martin's sensitive ears. He had expected no greeting of encouragement, but, these adverse conditions, imposed by unforeseen events, were more than he could long withstand. He rose up commandingly.

"If you will please be seated," he said, firmly, "we will begin the service of God by the use of 'Coronation.'"

The people grudgingly obeyed him, made a feeble effort at the tune, a halting between the lines, a clumsy staggering among the notes, and sat down, visibly shivering and displeased.

The minister's opening prayer was heard by ears that could not understand his desperate appeal for strength to carry him through a great ordeal. To them it was but an allusion to the storm and his walk to church. But Martin's voice was lifted above the heads of ruminating humanity to the God who comprehends the mystery of His own strange plan. His final words of invocation were lost in the rattle of the sexton's poker and the slamming of the iron doors.

Martin arose from his knees—not before this company, but before the Lord, the light of sacrifice in his eyes. He spoke almost in a whisper: "My text will be found in Luke, the tenth chapter, verses 25 to 37."

And he read these lines, wherein it is told how a certain lawyer, seeking to tempt the Master, asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and the Master's parable of the good Samaritan. "Go, and do thou likewise."

Turning then to St. John, he read more fervently: "'I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; but I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.'"

He deliberately spread the pages of the Bible at the centre, and placed a written sermon upon the open volume. He was not restricted to the manuscript. Every paragraph of that address was impressed upon his mind.

As he waited for some late-comers to settle themselves, he saw that he was destined to talk to inattentive ears — all save one: the leading member of the society, Zachariah Griffin, a rich man, as times went, who contributed most of the salary fund, a Jacksonian Democrat and an avowed pro-slavery man. To him alone, therefore, Martin determined to speak, as to one whose opinion was the voice of the Church—the voice of the vast majority.

He began the theme with a general statement of abstract truth regarding love and compassion; we should love not only friends and acquaintances, but strangers, and even our enemies.

Then came the application.

"I shall apply Christ's parable," he said, "to the subject of American slavery."

The leading member brought himself up with a jerk, his brows contracted into a forbidding arch, his mouth pursed into a lipless slit.

Martin had gained an audience. A rustle ran over the house. Eyes were focused on the grim figure in the middle pew. There was an electrical vibration of the surcharged air. Martin continued:

"I shall endeavor to show—

"First, the nature of American slavery;

"Secondly, that it is, in itself, radically, essentially wrong;

"Thirdly, that it is a source of incalculable evil, both to the slaves and the slave-holders;

"Fourthly, that it is not, and never was, sanctioned by the Bible;

"Fifthly, that it is our duty to use every laudable means to effect its removal."

As the last proposition came with virile force from his lips, he saw Griffin drop back into a slouching, defiant attitude. There was no retreating now.

"In Louisiana," Martin said, "slaves are both real estate and goods; in South Carolina, chattels; in all slave States they are not ranked as rational beings, but are claimed, held, and treated as Things, deprived of the right of reason and conscience.

"This does not turn upon the fact of ignorance nor advancement to the Anglo-Saxon plane, because the child remains in the status of the mother. A trace of African blood, imperceptible to the eye, establishes the slavery of the being, though the father may be a white man."

There was a flutter among the women. This subject wasn't fit for young folks to hear.

"Such a law is radically wrong," Martin went on. "No man can be the property of another; all men are equal, not in attainments or condition, but in essential rights. Property rights are, according to law, exclusive. That which belongs to one man cannot belong to another. A man, viewed as property, does not belong to himself. This is fundamentally false. A rational, immortal being cannot be property. Stealing does not bestow title; slavery is based on man-stealing, and, therefore, is essentially wrong. The continuance of a man in slavery is the incessant repetition of crime."

When Martin enunciated these premises, he attained to that mental attitude which he described as "liberty of speech." His voice was low, distinct, and clear—the voice of Enoch that night on the hill-side.

For two hours he held that congregation as in the hollow of his hand. He closed the Bible, and stepped to the edge of the platform for greater freedom. He was no longer pleading with a national, invisible host; he was Martin Brook, the man among a few hearers in

Shelburne. His face was pale, and he wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

Zachariah Griffin half rose from his seat in anger, gasped, snapped his teeth on the quid of tobacco in his jaw, and sank down again.

Martin went on: "I have marked the progress of this cause with deep solicitude. For a long time I have stood in the attitude of painful suspense. But, after having, I think, carefully examined both sides of the question, and deliberately counted the cost, I have at length, with firm, unfaltering step, 'passed the Rubicon.' It is said that abolitionists are schismatics, seeking to divide the Church. This is not true. But the latest argument, from the highest councils, is that 'Slavery is a great evil, and ought to be abolished, but the disease is incurable, and it is too late to apply a remedy.' Would Mr. Wesley have said this? Is sin so deep-rooted that we cannot prevail against Satan? Is God dead?

"No! Our Father is a Living, Eternal God! He commands us to proceed, in all the meekness and gentleness of Christ, to a discussion of this enormous evil, and to overthrow it, as we should and must its twin sister in crime, the Rum Power. Let us send our supplication to His gracious ears. And is there one in this assembly who can withhold from this petition his hearty and believing Amen?"

Martin sank down on the sofa behind the pulpit and bowed his head in his hands.

Griffin got up, his lank figure trembling with suppressed rage. His high cheek-bones, his deep-set eyes, his protruding chin were each accentuated by the motion of his jaw as he shifted his quid of tobacco. He walked sternly to the red-hot stove, opened the door, and ejected a shower of tobacco juice on the embers. A hissing, like writhing snakes, sounded in the room. The man cleared his throat with a rasping, prolonged guttural, as he slowly walked back and stood in front of the altar rail.

"I got sumpthin' I want to say," he began, deliberately. "I been a seeker and a professor o' religion nigh onto thirty year. I done more fur this church 'n any other man. I pay liberal, and I got a voice in our councils. Now, my brother lives down South. He's overseer on a Virginia plantation, and he knows more about the institution of slavery and its ins and outs than I do—and more than some others does," nodding backward towards Martin. "And he says it's necessary and all right."

Martin started up. "Is that man your brother?" he exclaimed. "The overseer on the Curtis plantation? The man who took Enoch back?"

"What are you talkin' about?" Griffin asked.

"I did not associate your name with his," Martin declared. "But now I see you are like him."

Again Griffin cleared his throat and wiped his mouth with the back of his left thumb.

"Don't try to shet me up," he said. "I'm a Jacksonian Democrat. I've read the Bible—some, I guess; and I believe in the divine right of lettin' folks that know as much as I do mind their own business. And I come here to listen to the word o' God. I get my politics at the post-office. And I want to say right here, that I guess we won't have no more mixin' o' politics and religion, not while I contribute to the missionary *and* salary funds here in this society."

"I have reason to remember your brother," Martin said, bitterly.

Griffin started down the aisle. "I wish he was here now to show you a thing or two," he retorted over his shoulder, and resumed his walk just as a little man who kept a grocery, with a barrel or two of the customary beverage in the rear of the store, came out of a pew.

Martin had sunk back on the sofa, the picture of Enoch's capture before him. Now he rose again at the sound of another voice.

"I want to bear the testimony o' my witnesses," the grocer cried, in a metallic voice that seemed to rise in the apex of his receding forehead, run down an incline to the point of his prominent nose, and retire on an equal angle of his chinless jaw into the creases of his cravat. "I agree with our brother, an' I want to say that I won't listen to this mixin' o' business an' religion."

The leading member paused in the aisle. "We will not discuss business on the Sabbath," he said, coldly.

"I guess I've as much right to talk as you have. I pay my share," the little man asserted. "He hit you as much as he did me. You were findin' fault last night with my Santy Crooze, an' I—"

"Hold your tongue," the leading member commanded.

"I won't! You think you run things, because you pay. You'd better pay what you owe me. I'd have more to give to the Church."

The little man's wife caught him by the coat-skirts and pulled him violently into the seat. "Set down!" she ordered.

The children laughed, covering their mouths with their hands.

The leading member towered up near the door. Pointing a shaking finger at Martin, who stood with his hand raised appealingly, he said: "See what you have done! You've brought dissension and discord into the sanctuary!" He slammed the door as he went out.

"The congregation will please consider itself dismissed," Martin said, and sat down.

Not a man or woman came to him, as he waited for physical strength to leave the place.

Martin descended the pulpit steps and struggled homeward, bowing his head to the wintry blast.

He locked himself in his room and dropped to his knees in a whirlwind of emotion. Mrs. Dalton tried vainly to attract his attention.

He was beyond the reach of human sympathy—he was where the grace of God alone could sustain him now. There was no faltering of the heart. The tired body was weak, but the soul was strong within him.

And in this dark hour his mind grew calmer, borne upward by a single thought; undefined at first, yet taking form as the hours went on.

"Mary! Dear Mary!" he whispered. Her presence seemed to fill the room. "She knows that this is my day of trial by fire—she is watching the moments; she is with me, a spiritual miracle of love and strength. She knows that I am now only Martin Brook—the abolitionist!"

Chapter VIII

Martin Brook soon learned what it meant to offer resistance to the movement of the ordained — learned what it means to feel the buffetings of resentful conditions that are angry at their disturbance. And yet, he argued, it is only by this interference with a tendency to the permanent—the evidence of immortality—that the Established is confirmed in its evolution. He knew that he had become an abolitionist before the people demanded such a thought. He knew that he had disturbed the Established, and the tides of hostility were destined to sweep over him.

The winter blustered itself away. As the storm of Martin's first declaration had engulfed him, so now the modifying influence of the accustomed tempered him to his new estate of mind.

He had not startled the world. The effects of his sermon were local, merely; and the load was heavier on his shoulders because of the smallness of the area of invigoration. The annoyances of a petty environment reached him directly and personally. He felt the censure of his people. He lacked the sustaining aid of men who dealt with large affairs. There were a few, as is always the case, who remained friendly; but the official members of his church turned a cold shoulder on him. He was alone with a universal problem. Most of his associates were incapable of understanding him; but Mrs. Dalton was among the few who proved to be friends in need—a type of greatness of soul reduced to the dimensions of her surroundings. She perceived, in her small way, that his keenest suffering came from a consciousness that he was misunderstood.

"Don't get down-hearted, Mr. Brook," she said, cheerily. "I should just like to tell them what I think! but, my sakes! 'tain't worth while. I ain't a talker. Do you intend to come back here another year?"

"I have no plans. I shall leave my appointment entirely with the Conference," he said.

"I was goin' to say that I'm goin' to break up here. You'll have to get another boardin'-place after June, if you do come back, 'cause I'm goin' down to Troy to live with my brother. He's in the butter and egg business down there, with a man named Larrabee."

"Larrabee?" said Martin. "That's a familiar name. I know a man—Eph Larrabee—"

"Why, his name's Eph. I wonder if it's him."

"Possibly. I have lost sight of my old acquaintance. Speaking of my future, Mrs. Dalton, Conference will meet about the middle of June, and the Lord will provide a way for me. But I shall miss you, if I return here and you are gone. You have been very kind to me." He left the room.

"Humph!" Mrs. Dalton ejaculated. "It must keep the Lord pretty busy providin' for them Methodists—movin' about as they do. I sh'll be glad when I can get back among my folks and hear some real good Cong'gational preachin'."

True, as always, to his promise, Charles Chichester was the first man to greet Martin at the Conference, when it assembled the next June.

"Why, I'm glad to see you!" Martin said. "Are you here on business?"

"Yes," said Chichester. "It's business, sure enough—political business."

"Political? Is there a convention—"

"Oh, see here, Mr. Brook," Chichester laughed. "I'm going to have you sent to Troy. That's the political work."

Martin's face took on a serious look. "I would prefer to have no suggestion made regarding my assignment."

"Leave that to me," Chichester said, and laid his hand on Martin's arm as they walked into the church.

Neither of them had noticed a man standing within sound of their voices—a man in a natty hunting-suit, who was evidently on his way either to or from a trip in the woods. If they had observed him, they would have discovered Sidney Graham.

At the close of the Conference, when the appointments were read, Martin heard the bishop assign him, not to Troy, but to Keeseville. He caught Chichester's eye across the assembly-room and smiled. Chichester pushed his way through the crowd and reached him.

"It's your own fault," Chichester declared. "I did my best. Somebody beat me, that's all. I'll find out who it is, and be even with him."

Martin rebuked him, good-humoredly, and said good-bye. He went out, walking along the street, with eyes on the ground, unheeding those about him. Some one wilfully blocked his way.

"Excuse me—" Martin said, involuntarily. His words of apology stopped short.

Sidney Graham was standing directly in his path, with legs wide apart and hands thrust deep into his pockets. There was a sarcastic smile on his face—a face that showed the marks of reckless living. He was no longer in hunting-costume, but he was flashily dressed. His manner of cool insolence showed that he had deliberately offered the insult.

"I notice you didn't get that Troy appointment," Graham said.

Martin looked at him, first in amazement and then in gathering anger. For a moment he forgot his sacred calling; he felt his muscles hardening. The thought flashed through his mind: how did Graham know that mention had been made of his name in connection with Troy? The action of the bishop and his cabinet was taken in secret. Then came the realization of his obligations. He was a Methodist preacher, subject to disciplinary rules. He was no longer permitted to avenge an insult with a blow.

Graham continued: "You do so well up here in the woods that we like to keep you here." His tone implied an influence in the Conference and a sarcastic friendliness.

"We? What have you to do with Church affairs?"

"About as much as Chichester, I guess."

"Mr. Chichester is my friend—"

"Oh, he's everybody's friend. Let me give you a hint: When you talk private matters on the street, speak a little lower." He laughed at Martin's evident perplexity. He moved a step or two and lighted a cigar, puffing the smoke in Martin's face.

"Why, this is dastardly!" Martin said, hotly, with clinched fists. "You overhear a private conversation and make use of it!"

"Yes," Graham said, offensively. "I happen to have some influence. You know I am residing in Albany now. No? Well, I am. I'll mention having met you. Mrs. Graham will be delighted."

Martin stepped in front of Graham. "You are more contemptible than I imagined."

"Why not say more influential?" Graham replied, trying to appear indifferent, but watching Martin's fists. "I've stayed here a week, my fine man, just to down you in this move, as I have downed you in—in several others."

Graham walked away, but turned and said, loud enough to be heard by the ministers who had gathered near them, amazed at the extraordinary spectacle of a street quarrel by one of their number:

"By-the-way, I understand you have become an abolitionist. Are you in training for the Presidency?"

He walked jauntily off, joining an acquaintance, who laughed at his joke as he pointed to Martin.

Martin remained standing where Graham had left him, until a friend came up and took him by the arm.

"You are not disappointed at your station?" the friend asked.

"No," Martin replied, thoughtfully. "I was indulging in some very unministerial thoughts. Thank you for bringing me to a sense of duty."

But the incident did not long remain in Martin's mind, except as an unanswered problem: How far is a minister justified in chastising an insolent bully?

His happiness at the thought of going where Mary was overbalanced the annoyance of this personal insult. He was glad that Chichester had failed in the attempt to send him to Troy, since at Keeseville he could be within the immediate atmosphere of Mary's love.

And Mary, in the pleasure of having him near her, was inexpressibly happy.

She saw, with an intuitive sight, that there was something he did not tell her—some secret feeling that distressed him. But she did not press a confidence he seemed indisposed to volunteer. His memory of Graham's brutal reference to his abolitionism awakened into positive action the dread he felt for Mary's acceptance of his new destiny. It was a realization of an anticipated hostility which she, when once his wife, must share.

And yet he longed for her. Their daily meeting—for it was known that Martin and Mary were engaged, and he was free to be with her—was only a confirmation of his dependence on her, and his nearest friends, to whom he spoke of his affairs, urged him to the change. There appeared to be no cause for further delay.

So, at her uncle's house, in the little parlor where he had first realized that he loved her, and where she had confessed her love for him, they were married. Without display or ostentation, after the simple manner of his Church, they took upon themselves the sacred vows.

The school-children brought wreaths of bright autumn leaves and flowers, and sang the songs that she had taught them. A quiet wedding, the neighbors said; but all the glare and pomp of royal ceremony could not have made it a more holy union of two lives.

"Dear wife!" Martin would repeat, for joy of saying it, as they took up the humble round of domestic cares in the parsonage. "You have the home-building quality, if I do lack it. Maybe, some day, I shall actually become acquisitive!"

"Let us learn to acquire the riches of contentment," she replied, in her desire to transform the tiny home into a haven of rest for Martin.

It was, too, a place where every one loved to come—there was an air of hospitality and cheer about them that lightened many a heavy heart.

One day Chichester burst in upon them, in his breezy way.

"I've gone three whole blocks out of my road to shake hands with you, old man," he cried. "I'd show more grit if I cut you dead. It's just my luck! Whenever I think of getting married, along comes a homelier man and cuts me out!"

"I'm glad I am homelier, if that's possible," Martin said.

"You ought to be," Chichester replied. "But I'm glad it happened as it did—for her sake. I'm not good enough for her. That sermon of yours settled the matter in my mind. I believe—upon my word, I believe she wrote it! Come now," he laughed, "own up! She has the brains of the family!"

"Not only the brains," said Martin, gravely, "but the spiritual strength as well. Come," he added, "Mary will be glad to see you."

One evening, several months after their marriage, Martin was sitting alone in his study. Mary came to him, and laid her hand on his head. He glanced up, smiling, from the plans and estimates of the church he was hoping his people would build. The old building was surely too small for the growing congregation.

"Martin, please don't do any more to-night," she said.

He shoved the papers from him with a sigh of relief. "I have done all I can do. It's a big undertaking."

"Then why do you try it?"

"Oh, I must. There is a disposition on the part of —of some to withdraw support; but we have raised nearly enough to complete the church."

"Why do they withdraw support?" She pushed a footstool to the side of his chair, as he turned his back to the table, and sat down, resting her arms on his knees. He stroked her hair with one hand and leaned his head on the other, his elbow on the arm of his chair.

"The same old story, dear. Some of the members of the official board are angry with me for alluding to—to the Cause."

"Which do you need most: A new church, or the conversion of men to the Cause?"

"Do you ask me to give up—"

"No—no," she said, quickly, "not that. But there are different ways of accomplishing the same good end. Learn to adapt yourself to the larger question more slowly. God will right all wrongs in His own good time. You are wearing yourself out by this urgency. You can't reform the world alone and in a minute."

"True; but, as His instrument, I must be governed by my conscience. Principles stand before expediency. The argument against me is that I am impractical."

"You need not sacrifice principle. Who is your strongest opponent? Has Brother Dillinger refused to pay his subscription?"

"Yes. He told me that he would not pay a cent if I ever mentioned slavery in the pulpit."

"His name is on the paper," she suggested. "He is legally bound to pay this subscription, regardless of his opinion of you."

"I know he is; but that means a lawsuit, if we try to enforce collection."

"It is legal—right is lawful," she said.

He smiled sadly. "Why, my dear, my contention is with the law—which is not, as you incorrectly imply, always right. If I were to go into a court, on a case against Brother Dillinger, I doubt if either judge or jury would vindicate me. He is a political power in this place, and prejudice is on his side. No. There must be no lawsuits over a Methodist subscription."

"Then try moral suasion."

"He ordered me out of his store this morning," Martin said, grimly, "because I told a pro-slavery man that slavery was a sin. Brother Dillinger said I was ruining his business."

Mary turned her face from the light, to hide the trembling of her lip. Ordered out of a public place! And this was Martin Brook, the athlete who had whipped the village bully in Sandy Hill and thrown Sidney Graham into the Hudson!

"Did you resent the insult?" she asked.

"I told him I regretted his behavior," Martin replied.

"Why didn't you—" She checked herself, her little body quivering.

"Why didn't I knock him down?" he asked, with a smile. "I am not a Peter Cartwright." Then, gravely: "If I resented every personal insult, I should be known as a fighting parson. I have borne much."

She looked into his face keenly.

"Martin," she said, "there is something you have kept from me ever since you came back from Conference. I saw it from the first in your looks and manner. What is it?"

He kissed her on the uplifted forehead. "It is simply that I know a dear little woman who has the sharpest eyes in this great big world!"

"Tell me!" she commanded, slapping his hands.

"Why, it isn't worth the breath, Mary."

"I *knew* I was right! Tell me!" She imprisoned his hands, while he made show of being frightened. Her eyes flashed.

"Well," he said, gently releasing a hand to pat hers as they lay in his one broad palm, "it was—you'd never guess—it was Sidney Graham." She drew a quavering breath. "He said something that made me forget my calling for a moment. I was nearer to a violation of my obligations as a preacher than ever before, and I—"

"Did you throw him into the river again?" she cried.

"Fortunately, we weren't near the river this time." A twinkle was in his eyes, but he grew grave beneath her steady gaze as he told her of the incident. She sat with eager, bated breath.

"You see, my dear," he said, "what it means to be the wife of an abolitionist."

"You *are* an abolitionist, and I am proud of you!

You *could* have whipped him if you had tried; but you didn't because you are the bravest and truest of men." She dropped back to her place, with her elbows on his knees and her chin in both her hands. "We'll build the church, Martin," she said, with a deep, convincing sigh.

He laughed outright—the first ringing, old-time laugh she had heard him give for weeks. She looked up at him in surprise.

"Forgive me, sweetheart," he said, wiping the tears of laughter from his eyes. "I wasn't exactly prepared for that conclusion. From thrashing Graham to building a church is really quite a long jump. But you were always a rapid thinker."

"Why," she said, contracting her forehead, "isn't a man who can govern his temper greater than he that taketh a city? And I guess a man like that can build one little wooden Methodist church."

"Stone, my dear. We contemplate using stone," he said.

"Well, marble then, with jasper gates!"

He lifted her hand to his lips. "I will do the best I can," he said, "with your help."

Chapter IX

THE church was built, and of solid stone, too, before Martin had completed his second year at Keeseville; and the records showed a clear accounting, free from debts—except that more enduring debt of gratitude to God, on which Martin sought to pay the interest by a renewal of his zeal.

A revival followed the material effort with a spiritual awakening, not only in Keeseville, but in Burlington, where Martin was stationed during the next two years; and his soul was filled with gratitude.

"The past year has been one of glorious upliftment," Martin wrote in his diary, just before the assembling of Conference. "The hostility of the few, occasioned by my continued advocacy of freedom, was overcome in large measure, so far as my personal feelings and Mary's comfort are concerned, by the friendliness of the many. And God has blessed me. A son was born to us within the shelter of these cottage walls, where the vast tumult of the great world has no place."

And in Mary's heart the only question of conflict was the choice of baby's name.

"But, dearest," Mary urged, "it should be 'Martin,' of course."

"We must give the boy your name, Mary, somehow. Suppose we decide on your father's name—let us call him Thomas Whittaker."

"Can't we add yours, too?" she pleaded.

"We know what your father was," Martin said. "It is safer to trust to that knowledge."

But long before the infant Thomas could expound the differences in the ceremonies of baptism or pass judgment on their saving grace, it chanced that Charles Chichester again found business reasons for visiting the region of the Champlain; and from his capacious leathern trunk there came forth the most beautiful silver cup that Mary had ever seen.

"Martin," she said, "you were right. The name *looks* right."

"Right?" said Chichester. "Of course, it's right. Wait till 'Martin Brook' stands for an idea. Then name the babies after him."

"I learned of Graham's interference with my plans for you," he went on to Martin, "and I started a campaign. I shall be on the ground here in Burlington at the opening of the Conference, and I shall say: 'We want Martin Brook in Troy.' I will back this up with a petition they won't dare to ignore."

"Are you sure that I *am* wanted in Troy?" Martin said, in protest.

"Wanted? I want you, and that's one. You leave the rest to me. You're too modest, my dear man." He picked the precious baby up, while Mary stood trembling with anxiety. "Ain't he, Thomas Whittaker Brook, Esquire? That's what. Too modest; that's what your old daddy is!"

"Perhaps I'd better take him now," Mary suggested, tremblingly.

"Oh, don't be afraid, Mrs. Brook," Chichester declared. "Thomas W. knows his old Uncle Charles—don't you, chick?"

"I hope he will know you some day," Mary said, rescuing the baby.

"He will — mark my word, he will," Chichester averred, as Mary quitted the room. "Fine boy, that! Couldn't help being, with such a mother. I tell you, Brook, you must look to the main chance now. You've got something to live for."

"I appreciate that fact," Martin said.

"Then show it next June. I'll be at the Conference, if I have to go on two sticks. Pity we can't have a vote on our ministers," Chichester said, scowlingly.

"If that would bring you into the Church," Martin said, with a touch of humor, "I should favor it myself."

"Oh, well," Chichester replied, "I'm just on the outside, you know; right up close to the front door."

"You are so close to the door of my heart that I wish to see you converted to the faith," Martin said, shaking his hand, as Chichester was leaving.

And he was close to the good bishop, too, when Conference met.

The venerated bishop, in the maturity of a noble manhood, was conscious of every need of the region and the time. His early service on the Plattsburg circuit, and his later experiences as preacher and prelate, had brought him into firm touch with all the members of the Troy Conference. He knew Martin, and loved him as he might a son, taking the younger man into his great heart, that beat with sympathy for all who showed a courage for the truth.

"My dear Martin," the bishop said, calling him to the privacy of his own room, "they are asking for you in Troy. There is no man in your Conference I would rather see in stations of large resources. You have been tried here, in the new sections, where vigorous men are required, and you have proved yourself worthy of confidence and esteem. I have watched your development with a fatherly eye. I am now sixty-two. My years of activity are drawing to a close, and I have lived to see our Church expand from a quarter of a million to nearly a million souls. I predict a speedy awakening of interest. The times are ripe for it. Now, let me say a few plain words. You will take them kindly?"

He held out his hand, as in blessing. Martin grasped it.

"Dear bishop," he said, "I shall regard what you say as not only the words of authority and wisdom, but of love."

"Thank you, my dear brother," the bishop replied. "Then I say this: You are filled with zeal. You are, by nature, emotional—a good quality, if rightly directed. But you have recently come into a form of feeling that somewhat threatens your usefulness as a preacher. I am a man of years and experience, with eighteen of those years spent in the episcopacy. I have seen a good deal of the world and have encountered all sorts of men. My office is judicial. I am no less fervent in the cause of humanity than you are, but I have learned that one man cannot do all the work. We must each put a shoulder to the wheel, and we must wait for God's signal to exert our strength. Will you promise me, for your own good, to be more discreet in one respect—to be more guarded in the expression of your political views?"

"Political views?" Martin said, questioningly.

"Yes. Hold to your principles; be manly in the discussion of all questions in season; but be more prudent. There is a time for silence."

"My principles are based on convictions."

"That is right; but you should bear in mind that human opinion is fallible. Do not mistake my meaning. I oppose slavery as sincerely as you do, but I allude to the opinions regarding the method of the extinction of the evil. We can hold views on essentials that are correct beyond doubt, and still err on policies concerning the surest means of remedying error in others."

"I am not a policy man," Martin affirmed. "There can be no compromise with sin—and American slavery is the greatest national sin."

"One of the greatest, let me venture to say. We find many serious forms of wickedness," the bishop said, mildly.

Martin walked up and down the room, in profound thought.

"Now, Martin," the bishop continued, "look at this matter through my eyes, grown far-sighted and conservative. Slavery came in with our forefathers; it is deep-rooted, but in God's own time it will be exterminated. We are verging on perilous events. Our Church may yet be divided on this subject—"

"Yes," said Martin, "because of the Northern pro-slavery influence and the lukewarmness of our high officials."

The bishop's stern but benevolent features relaxed into a smile.

"There you go again. That is a reflection on me."

"No—no," Martin hastened to say.

"Well, I have only one more suggestion to offer. You are a man of rare intellectual powers; your integrity is established. Our Church, in its growth, will soon be needing a larger number of bishops. The judicial mind is demanded in that office. You are in the right locality to claim attention—all conditions are favorable excepting this lack of the calmly judicial in your mental make-up. Follow my advice. Do you comprehend my meaning?"

Martin grew pale. He stood before the man he loved and honored as before a tribunal.

"My dear bishop," he said, "I entered the service of God, to preach Christ, and Him crucified. I might have chosen a worldly profession, but I did not, because I felt ordained to do this work for freedom from the pulpit. I shall preach the gospel as I understand it. I would rather appear before my Maker from obscurity and with a clear conscience, than from the highest office in our Church gained at the expense of my vow to God."

The bishop rose and took Martin's hand.

"May God strengthen you, my dear brother, in the choice you have made," he said, solemnly, with a sad look in his eyes, "and you will need wisdom equal to your strength! I would rejoice to see you in the College of Bishops. If you would only maintain an honorable silence, I see no reason why you should not reach that dignity. I can say no more: think on what I have said."

There were tears in the bishop's eyes when Martin thanked him and left his presence; and there was a peculiar earnestness in his voice when, at the close of the session, the bishop read the appointments and looked towards Martin as he said, distinctly:

"Troy: Martin Brook."

Chichester came hurrying up as the announcement was made.

"We've outgeneralled them this time," he whispered, in glee.

"No," Martin said, slowly; "it is the ordering of a Higher Power."

"Well, whatever you think, it's all right," Chichester laughed. "But I am sorry I can't be in town when you first reach there. I'm going out to Michigan on business—in timber-lands now, you know—and shall be gone a month. The inconvenience of being a bachelor is not having a home for my friends; but I'll see Mr. Ketchum and have him get the parsonage in shape. He's the leading steward. Good-bye." They shook hands, Martin expressing regret at his friend's absence. Chichester turned: "Oh, by-the-way, I forgot this—the key to the parsonage." He handed Martin a little packet, and quickly disappeared in the crowd. Martin opened the wrapping and discovered a fifty dollar bill on the Commercial Bank of Troy.

"Mary is right," Martin mused. "That man *is* a Christian at heart."

A rainy day in the city—a cold, unseasonable, windy day, that was intended for the far North, but got mixed in its bearings and was making itself generally disagreeable in the streets of Troy; a disreputable, disorderly day, that defied the constables to take it up where it belonged.

On such a day Martin stepped from the coach, and inquired at the office if Mr. Ketchum was present. Mr. Ketchum was not present; and nobody about the place appeared to know where Mr. Ketchum was at that particular moment, or whether he designed being present at all. Martin returned to the coach, which was by this time freed from the luggage in the leather-covered boot that projected behind the vehicle like a misplaced, exaggerated nose, and spoke to some one inside.

"There is some mistake, Mary. Mr. Ketchum isn't here. You will have to get out and come into the office until I can find him."

Mary Brook appeared at the coach door and carefully handed forth a bundle of flannel. Martin took it, and helping Mary to alight, ran quickly under cover. Mary followed him swiftly, to avoid the rain.

Once inside the small building, the swathings of the bundle moved. The infant Thomas lifted up a voice of earnest protest at the world's behavior. Mary soothed and quieted him, while Martin stood in the doorway, frowning at the empty street. The coach was under cover now. The horses were stamping into their stalls. Even a stray dog, that had sniffed at him as he descended, had found a dry corner in which to skulk. But he, the new pastor of the leading Methodist Church in that thriving city, had nowhere to shelter his wife and babe from the storm.

"Can you tell me where I will be likely to find Mr.—Brother—Ketchum?" Martin asked the clerk, who was watching him with curiosity.

"Why, they's a Ketchum keeps a grocery down here 'bout three blocks. Mebbe it's him you want."

"Three blocks?" Mary said. "Can't we go there, Martin? Perhaps he didn't get your letter."

"I will go and see him. You stay here till I return," Martin said.

"No," said Mary. "Let me go, too. This place is so public."

They started down the street, Martin carrying the baby and a big umbrella; Mary, wrapped tightly in her pelisse, clinging to his arm.

"This must be the place," Martin said, stopping before a dingy grocery, whose small windows were filled with various signs of the purveyor's trade.

They entered the dark store. An odor of smoked meats, salted fish, molasses, tobacco, and whale-oil, in indefinable contest with spices, assailed their nostrils. At the rear of the long, narrow room, in a box stove, a feeble flame was sputtering grumblingly at a stick or two of unseasoned wood. On the end of the counter, at the side of the stove, stood a desk with an inclined top and a little railing to pen in the ink-bottle and quills and keep them from plunging to fiery suicide. A small window in the rear wall tried to admit some light, but, discouraged at its failure, resigned itself to supporting a family of spiders in a misty grove of cobwebs.

Behind the desk stood a tall, stoop-shouldered man, in a greasy suit of threadbare broadcloth, originally planned for Sunday wear. His long slender legs were not visible, but were left to the imagination of those who could judge of what his legs must be by the length and shape of his arms. A profile view of his face suggested stubbornness of character—the chin protruded on a straight line with the jaw, and seemed envious of the nose, that began right and went twisting off wrong, ending in a bulb. The eyes were somewhere behind a big pair of silver spectacles with sliding bows, and were trying to lose themselves under shaggy brows.

The man was rubbing his unshaven chin with a claw-like hand, puckering his mouth in the study of some papers on his desk. He did not look up as Martin approached him, leaving Mary standing at the door.

"Is this Brother Ketchum?" Martin asked.

"Eh?" the man said, turning his head, without the slightest show of interest.

"I am Martin Brook—"

"Oh, be ye? Well, my name's Ketchum."

"Mr. Chichester said you were to meet me—us—at the stage. I wrote you telling—"

"Yes, I know. I got your letter here somewheres," glancing about the desk. "Why didn't Chichester look after ye—he got ye to come here, didn't he?"

Martin's blood started on a sudden journey to his head. He was nearing the unministerial line again.

"My wife is here," he said, repressing his anger, "and she is very tired. I suppose you have the key to the parsonage. Will you go with us and show the way?"

"Well, I dunno what arrangements has been made about the place; dunno as anything—"

"Why, where are we to stay to-night? I need scarcely remind you it is the custom for some member of my church to receive and entertain the new preacher. It has become a right we must demand. A Methodist minister cannot think of going to a tavern at such a time, and Mr. Chichester told me you had been named as the one to receive us."

"Oh," said Ketchum, "I don't care where you stay. We're cleaning house, I guess. That is, my wife ain't very well, and—"

"And my wife has ridden for hours—we have been several days on the journey from Burlington. My household goods are at the warehouse, and I presume there is no stove or bed in the parsonage. I was never before treated in this way." He walked towards Mary.

"Well, pull up a chair by the stove and tell your wife to set down, if she's tired," Ketchum said, indifferently.

"Mary," Martin said, and his voice trembled, "please go down there with baby, and sit while I go out and find a suitable tavern."

He led the weary woman to the stove, and placed a chair for her.

"This is—Brother Ketchum," the customary term strangled him for a moment. "The gentleman—who did *not* meet us."

Ketchum grunted a recognition. "I hain't got no time to leave the store."

"This is a very bad day for a baby to be out," Mary said. "We have had an unpleasant journey, sir."

"Ya-as, I s'pose so," the man replied. "I know 'tain't no day for customers."

"Will you tell me," Martin demanded, "where I can find a temperance house?"

"There's one up on Ida Hill," Ketchum suggested.

"Why, that is nearly a mile from here," Martin said, indignantly.

"No; not more'n half a mile, I guess."

"Why do you treat me in this manner?" Martin inquired, his eyes blazing and his hands shut tight.

Ketchum deliberately took off his spectacles.

"I told Chichester I'd give you the cold shoulder from the start. I don't want ye here—nor no other black abolish'nist!"

Martin turned to his wife.

"Oh, Mary, Mary! I have brought you to this!"

"No, you have brought me where I can understand the need of the work you are doing," she answered, bravely.

Ketchum came from behind the counter, and started towards the front of the store. He stopped as Mary spoke, and looked at her with contempt. "Humph!" he said; "I heerd you was an abolish'nist, too." He turned away.

Martin wheeled on him, with an arm drawn back to strike. A little girl came running in. "Ma wants half a pound o' tea an' a pound o' crash sugar," she called out. Martin's hand dropped to his side.

"Martin, please don't!" Mary cried, half rising.

"You are right," he said.

Thomas squirmed into an attitude of freedom and emitted a shrill scream.

"Let us go," she whispered.

"Yes," said Ketchum. "This ain't no place for young ones."

"I don't like to leave you here," Martin said, "but I must find a place first. It won't do to take baby into the rain, you know."

"I will stay," she said.

Martin left her there, hushing and crooning baby to sleep, and hurried on his quest. When he was gone, Mary drew back as far out of sight as she could and buried her face in the baby's wrappings.

Ketchum, after waiting on the little customer, shuffled to the door and stood scowling at the retreating figure of Martin.

A gust of wind came swooping down the hill. It tossed Martin's umbrella high above his head and turned it wrong side out.

A hearty, good-natured guffaw at his ridiculous plight burst on his ears. He faced about, fiercely, but stopped in amazement, as his tormentor cried out:

"Well, well! I swan! Where 'n earth did you blow from?"

Eph Larrabee grabbed him by the hand, pulling him half off his feet and sending the umbrella whirling down the hill. "Why, Eph, I'm glad to see you!" he exclaimed.

"Well, I'll be darned!" Eph roared. "Ef this don't beat all! Where'd you come from? Rain down?"

"I don't know," Martin gasped, struggling from the grip of his friend, "but I guess you dropped from heaven—to help a pretty angry man."

"Heaven? Haw, haw!" Eph exploded. Then, with seriousness: "Pretty nigh heaven, though. I'm married! Been married most a month!" He straightened up, glowing with importance.

"Is that so?" Martin said, with interest.

"Ye-es!" Eph declared. "Never expected to be, but I *am*. Found my 'heart's delight,' as the feller says. Gosh! But you orter see her!"

"I'm sure we shall be pleased to meet her," Martin said, his mind on Mary.

"Well, come right up to my house," Eph insisted, taking Martin's arm. "She ain't lookin' fer comp'ny, but that don't make no difference. She'll be mighty glad to see you." He pulled Martin along.

"No-o, no, I can't come now," Martin protested. "Some other day—I'm occupied now. I must find a place for my wife and—"

"What?" Eph stood still. "Wife with ye, too?"

"Yes. I left her to find a suitable house—a temperance house. She is at Brother Ketchum's store."

"Where?" Eph ejaculated. "At that old skunk's! Well, I guess—"

"Don't," said Martin. "Mr. Ketchum is a leading member in—"

"Yes, I know," Eph said, spinning Martin about and starting down the street towards the store. "I've had some dealin' with him. We'll get your wife and come right up to our house." He caught the wayward umbrella as he came to it, slipped its whalebone ribs back into place, and hastened on with long strides.

"Ketchum?" Eph inquired. "How'd you come to know him?"

"Why, Eph, haven't you heard that I am sent here to preach?"

Eph stopped once more. "No. You don't tell me! Well, you see," he added, as he started on. "I ain't a Methodist, but I'm religious now," he apologized. "Hain't exactly experienced religion, but I've come mighty nigh it. I've united with the Cong'gationals. Was ye goin' to visit Ketchum's folks?"

"No," Martin explained. "He was—that is, I understood he was—to meet us at the stage, but he didn't, and I went around to his store. He can't have us at his house while I am getting my things up from the dock, and I wanted to find a place to stop."

"Oh, I see. Well, here we be." Eph plodded into the store like a genial behemoth fresh from a bath. "Here we be!" he cried, holding out his big hand.

Mary started up with a cry of surprise and relief, clutching the baby to her breast.

"Why, it's Eph—Mr. Larrabee!"

"Just plain old Eph's good 'nuff fur me, Miss Mary —I mean Mis' Martin Brook. An' a baby, eh? Well, does beat all how time flies!"

"I met Eph by the best of good-fortune," Martin explained, "and he insists on our going to his house."

"Oh, I'm so glad," Mary said, smiling through her tears.

"Well, so be I," chuckled Eph. "Git yer things an' come right along. This ain't no settin'-room."

"We can stay at your house to-night?" Mary asked.

"To-night?" Eph said, heartily. "You're goin' to stay there just as long as you want to stay. You can't cart your goods in the rain, an' you can't get your house settled in a minute, can ye?"

Ketchum stood silently behind his desk. Larrabee turned from Mary to him.

"Mebbe they's some charge fer the use of this chair," he said, sarcastically. "If there is, Mr. Ketchum, you kin put it down against my account. I owe ye one, ye know, an' ye might's well make it two. Oh, I'll pay it some day!"

"I am sorry," Martin interposed, "to have occasioned Brother Ketchum any trouble."

Ketchum's jaws snapped together. "I guess you'll have trouble enough to make up for it before your year's up," he said.

Martin made no response. Sick at heart, he carried the baby from the store and walked along the drenched street. A gust of wind swept around the corner and nearly lifted Mary off her feet.

"It's only a step to our house in nice weather," Eph said, in loyal defence of his town, "but this ain't nachul weather."

"Are you sure that we won't inconvenience your wife?" Mary asked.

"Why, you're welcome as 'sparagus in spring. We don't make no fuss 'bout comp'ny—just open the door, and shove 'em right in. Gosh! but how you have growed since I first knowed you. An' I feel older, too, sence enterin' the holy estate o' mat'mony. Sorry Martin couldn't ha' been here to do it, but my wife bein' Cong'gational, got her minister to marry us. He's real smart. Baby got any teeth yet? One?

That's nice. I lost one o' my grindin' teeth las' fall. Ached some, an' I had it out. Here we be," and he flung the gate back wide.

With noisy hospitality, he led them on to the porch and threw the door open.

"Wife!" he called. "Fetched ye some comp'ny!" as he pushed them in before him.

An exclamation of glad surprise preceded a figure in a check gingham apron, as Mrs. Larrabee came running up with arms extended.

"Mrs. Dalton!" Martin cried, as Mary's face disappeared in a smothering embrace.

"Mis' Dalton that was, Mis' Larrabee that is," Eph said, with pride. "I told ye she'd be glad to see ye."

Chapter X

"Now, I'll tell you what we'll do," said Eph Larrabee, stretching his long legs and crossing his big feet, as he sat by his own fireside, with Martin in another "rocker" by him. "We won't do anything to-day—jest talk. Too all-fired rainy. Wait till to-morrer, an' I'll cart your goods, an' 'twon't cost you a cent."

Mrs. Larrabee had taken Mary and the baby upstairs into her own room, and was shaking out the damp garments and arraying Mary in an outfit of her own clothes. They had cried together and laughed together until they were settled into a calm frame of mind. Mary had told of Ketchum's cruelty to Martin, and of her own disgust and dismay. She found sympathetic ears into which to pour her story. "I believe," she said, "I shall hate the very smell of salt codfish the rest of my life. I shall always think of that terrible store when I see a fish."

"An' Mr. Brook's so fond o' fish, the way I fix it, too," said Mrs. Dalton, sympathetically. "But don't mind that. I know how it seems. When I lost my first husband, I thought I'd never fry doughnuts agin—he liked 'em so; but Mr. Larrabee's fond of 'em too, so I kinder forced myself to make 'em. We git used to things." She was drying Mary's pelisse and smoothing it out. "My! But ain't this right in style! My brother's wife's got one. I expect they're wearin' 'em considerable."

"Yes, they're very convenient. I hope the rain hasn't hurt it," Mary said, as she released baby from his wrappings, while Mrs. Larrabee watched him with smiling face.

"Looks jest like his pa; but he favors you some 'bout the eyes," she said, judicially. "Now, you make yourself comf'table, an' I'll go down an' finish my work, so's we can visit. I know what Mr. Brook likes to eat."

"I will help you as soon as baby is asleep," Mary said.

"You won't do nothin' o' the kind," her hostess replied. "You can come right down to the settin'-room an' visit with Mr. Larrabee, soon's you're free, but not a stitch o' work do you do in my house. My sakes! but ain't it nice to have you an' Mr. Brook here!" She kissed the baby and went down-stairs. When Mary came down, she found that all the necessary plans had been agreed upon by the men regarding the fitting up of the parsonage.

"Me an' my wife's brother's in the butter an' egg an' produce business," Eph explained to Mary. "That's how I come to meet the present Mis' Larrabee, you know, bein' 'round so much like with him, an' we've got horses an' rigs. I'll go down to the warehouse, soon's it lets up a speck, an' show you 'round, Martin. Then we'll go over to the parsonage an' see what's got to be done there to fix it up. An' you stay right here," to Mary. "It's a wonder I ain't out on a trip, over to Brunswick an' Berlin, but you caught me jest in time. I couldn't hardly keep from laughin' when I see you an' Martin hadn't heard who Mis' Larrabee was, an' I concluded I s'prise you some. If I'd been a Meth'dis', I'd a knowed you was expected, but bein' as it is, it's all right. Baby asleep?"

"Yes," said Mary, "but you mustn't let us interfere with your business, if you are ready for a trip into the country."

Eph laughed. "Guess brother-in-law kin do the buyin' *this* week. Have you heard from yer folks lately?" His face quickly changed its expression. He had spoken in a thoughtless way. He saw his blunder and tried to retrieve himself: "I mean, folks up Keeseville way—" Then, gravely: "I heered about—about your loss."

"There is scarcely time to hear from Keeseville," Mary smiled. "Can you tell us of the people in Sandy Hill? I know of the change at Elmhurst."

"Why," he said, with energetic relief, "sence I come away, jest after Martin was—jest after he left—I hain't kep' up no what you might call reg'lar correspondence with the jedge. Him an' me agreed to sep'rate. I tole him he might be a jedge an' all that, but so fur as bein' *right* was concerned, I thought he was wrong. So I quit, an' sence then I've prospered pretty fair. Own this place an' some consider'ble truck, one way 'n' nuther—me an' brother-in-law j'intly. Oh," he laughed, "we got 'nuff to *eat*, ye needn't worry 'bout that." He rubbed his chin gleefully.

"I am very glad," Martin said, "that you have done so well."

"Ever hear 'bout that old Enoch?" he asked.

"Not since—" Martin paused.

"Not sence you helped him on, eh?" Eph suggested, shrewdly. Martin looked at him keenly. "Oh, I know 'bout that, fur he's been here sence then. He's pilotin' nuther batch," he added, oracularly. "Me an' Chichester is causin' the eagle to scream some consider'ble. I allus go out *empty*, when I drive up north, you know, 'ceptin' bags o' feed an' crates." He smiled wisely.

"You help the—you help them?" Martin asked.

"Well, so Enoch says. I dunno nothin' myself. The ole man is workin' quite a brisk trade, seein' how fur he has to travel."

"Aren't you afraid you'll be arrested?" Mary asked.

"Well," he replied, slowly, "there *is* some men here that would like to get me out of the produce business. You hit one of 'em the first thing."

"Brother Ketchum?" Martin queried.

"I dunno what he's 'brother' to—not in Mary's presence, anyhow. Might make her mad if I said; but he's the man. Look out for him, if you hain't changed yer views—an' I guess ye hain't."

Mrs. Dalton came bustling in.

"I know ye must be half starved," she said. "You come right out and get a bite. I hain't made no fuss—just put up a leaf o' table and got some coffee and things. While you're eatin', I'll run up an' see if baby's all right. Eph, you take 'em right out."

This was only a beginning, for nearly a week was consumed in "settling" the parsonage; and during that time Martin and Mary found that there were many, very many, noble-hearted people in their church, who were indignant at the conduct of Ketchum. The understanding had been that he was to receive the new preacher, and his failure to do this increased his unpopularity, especially outside of the Church lines. But as he was "comfortably rich," and a leading steward, he had a following. Martin also learned that the anti-slavery cause was regarded as a menace to business in a town where certain kinds of manufacturing were beginning to command a profitable Southern trade, and Mary's practical sense came into action. In the first flush of her gratitude to those who were kind to them, and who helped to fill the church with a sympathetic and admiring audience—especially at evening service—she spoke cautioningly to Martin. She recalled the good bishop's sound advice.

"Do not give up your principles, Martin," she said, "and do not think I am speaking for myself; but for your own sake, and baby's, try to repress your opinions."

"I came here," Martin replied, "with that intention. I was resolved to be more guarded in my speech; but Brother Ketchum's treatment of you—"

"Let us forget that entirely," she urged.

And for several months the clouds were lifted from them. The whole-souled members of the church made the parsonage their stopping-place on every possible occasion. The young folks, particularly, manifested a liking for Martin, and the young women of the congregation found in Mary an adviser in their youthful affairs of heart and head.

Chichester was returned from the West, and his influence for good began to be felt in the church. The peace and good-cheer of these few months were so different from the gloom of that first rainy day in Troy that Mary almost feared to think of their happier condition. And baby was so strong and well!

In the midst of this season of quiet joy, Martin came home one day, pale and anxious. Mary was disturbed by his reticence and unusual nervous sensitiveness.

"What is it, Martin?" she asked.

"I have heard something that disturbs me," he said. "Brother Ketchum and Sidney Graham are associated in a new manufacturing business in Albany. They have started a straw-hat factory, and their trade is mainly with the Southern planters."

"Why should that distress you?" Mary remarked, lightly.

"I don't know," he replied, "but somehow Graham keeps coming into my life for some evil purpose."

Mary attempted to laugh away his sadness, but his manner finally alarmed her. "You don't seem well," she said.

"I don't feel very well," he admitted. "I believe I'd better lie down for a time."

All that night Martin tossed and groaned in fever, while Mary vainly tried to allay his restlessness. The next day she sent for the doctor, whose face, as he watched the patient, was not reassuring.

"What is it, doctor?" she asked, following him into the hall. "Tell me the truth. I am a doctor's daughter and I think I recognize some of these symptoms."

"You have had scarlet-fever?"

Mary's heart sank. "Yes, years ago," she said.

"There are a number of cases in the city. Let us hope that Mr. Brook will show improvement to-morrow. I do not feel like giving an opinion now. Should he not improve, you may need help, for your own sake, just to cheer you up a bit. Is there some one you can call in?"

"Some one?" Mary repeated, in a trembling voice. "You really don't think my husband is going to be seriously ill? And baby? Why, doctor—"

"His condition may not justify this alarm, but remember your own self. Much depends on you. I merely suggested the possible need of help."

Mary's face showed the courage that was in her.

"Mrs. Larrabee would come," she said, once more outwardly calm. "No one could be more comforting."

And before the week was ended Mrs. Larrabee had been called in, and had taken possession of the parsonage in her confident way.

"Bless you, child," she said, twisting her hands in her apron, "'tain't nothin'. I had it when I was a girl. You just stop worryin'. I'll run the house. My brother's wife'll look after Eph."

She proved, indeed, to be the faithful friend, always near during the days and nights of agony that followed, while the baby passed safely through the fever, and

Martin lay in the grasp of death, as only the strong can lie when smitten in their strength. She was still there when at last Mary, worn out with ceaseless watching and care, reached the verge of exhaustion, while Martin's fever was yet at its height.

"Now you just get a minute's sleep, dear," Mrs. Larrabee said, "and I'll set up. I'll call you if there's the least mite of change. He ain't sensin' a thing, and I'll do everything that's needed."

"The doctor said the crisis was near," Mary pleaded. "I must stay. Please let me stay."

"There ain't no use in it," Mrs. Larrabee insisted, gently leading her away. "You've got to save what strength you got left. If he comes to the least mite, I'll call you quick."

She was sitting by his bedside, in the semi-darkness of that early summer dawn, when Martin opened his eyes to consciousness. He saw Mrs. Larrabee and recognized her, but the room was strange—not the little study in Shelburne—as he struggled back to understanding.

"Mary," he whispered.

Mrs. Larrabee sprang up.

"There, there, hush! Go to sleep," she said, as to an infant.

"Mary," Martin repeated, with feeble insistence.

Mrs. Larrabee hurried out. "He's come to," she said, gently waking Mary. "I guess you'd better kind o' speak to him."

Mary hastened in, and knelt by the bed. "Martin, dear heart! Do you know me?"

Martin weakly laid his hand on her bowed head.

"Mary!" he sighed, like a tired, contented child, and slept.

Carefully she rose by slow degrees, and sat waiting for the return of reason. The hours passed, the doctor came, and smiled and nodded.

"Thank God!" she whispered.

"You have done this," the doctor said, "by your good nursing. Now he will need only Mrs. Larrabee's care. You must go and rest."

She shook her head. "Wait till he speaks to me."

Another hour passed. Suddenly Martin opened his eyes, but did not notice her or speak. He was watching the open space beyond the bed, and seemed to follow the movement of something invisible to her. His look was eager. His breath came quick. Mary started to call Mrs. Larrabee.

"Mary," he said, in his natural voice, "don't be frightened. He is gone. I shall live." He dropped back restfully, with a long-drawn sigh.

She sank to the floor, overwhelmed.

The period of waiting that ensued, with alternations of fear and hope, was harder to bear than those dreadful days when he tossed in the delirium of fever. There came brief intervals of lucid wakefulness and then long moments of quiet sleep. Gradually he regained strength, only to feel the weakness of that first stage of convalescence which is more hopeless than illness.

Yet with each passing day he made some measure of recovery, until the time when, sitting hand in hand, Mary felt that he was strong enough to be told of the love shown for him by the people of his church, by the Larrabees, and Mr. Chichester.

"We have lacked nothing, Martin," she said. "They have been very good to us."

"Yes," he said. "It almost makes me reconciled to this affliction to hear such reports—if it wasn't for the suffering you have had to bear."

"Hush, dear," she said. "We are one in sickness and in health."

"But I am always the one who brings trouble, and yet I am always the one to receive benefits."

"You never bring trouble; and if you receive benefits, that is because you deserve them," she said, stroking his wasted hand. "Now, you must stop being self-condemnatory, and grow strong again to resume your work."

"My work," he said, introspectively. "Yes, that is true." He turned more eagerly to her. "Mary, did you see that contest?"

"What contest?" she asked, fearing that he was overtired. "Please rest now."

"I am sure I was awake and rational," he went on. "That morning—when was it?—the day I came back to life, you know. I saw the clouds open and a figure in black approach me. You were here by my side; the room was just as distinct as it is now. The figure said: 'He has lost faith,' and laughed. Then came a great rustling, as of millions of wings beating the air. A figure in white flew into the room. It was dazzling in its purity. It said: 'He has not lost faith. I am the Spirit of All Life. There is work for him to do.' And they fought. The one in white hurled the one in black down—down—down. It seemed an infinite abyss. Then the Spirit of All Life said, touching me on the forehead: 'Arise!' I followed the spirit for millions of miles, and I was very weary. Then we stopped, and I saw a vast plain, on which there were piled great heaps of broken chains, and a host of people shouting, as if in praise. But I saw below them a countless array of stones, shining in the light, like the headstones of graves. A voice cried to me: 'Go to your work!' Oh, I was so tired, but I had to climb a high mountain, where there were serpents and wild beasts that chased me but did not harm me. And then a globe of light flashed into my eyes and I awoke here, in this little room, with your dear face shining on me with the reflection of that light."

He leaned back in his chair.

She took his thin hands in hers and covered them with kisses.

The reception by his congregation, the first Sunday after Martin's recovery, was most gratifying to him. His text was from Isaiah: "Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

In all his discourses since coming to Troy, he had not once alluded to slavery; and this sermon was but an exhortation to brotherly kindness. He revealed his gratitude to the people, who had been so generously thoughtful of him and his family, by delicate indirection, yet in a manner to show that such a spirit of rightness might be carried into our daily lives. It seemed as if he had, indeed, sought and found the kingdom of heaven on earth, in the great blessing of love.

The audience, moved to tears, sat in the hush of approving and sustaining sympathy, as he closed the Bible and said: "Let us pray." The atmosphere was laden with a generous impulse. Men felt strengthened for the labors of the week; women vowed themselves anew to faithfulness in their duties for the cause of humanity and the Church. All were bowed in silent prayer, while Martin's subdued tones floated out upon the air.

Harmony rested on the hearts of those who listened —rested on the heart of each, excepting one, and one only, in that throng of worshipers.

Jabez Ketchum sat in a conspicuous pew, near the centre of the church, with lowering face. Martin had angered him by the mention of man's duty to his fellowmen. Sensitive to his own importance in the community, he realized, as never before, the public disapproval of his conduct. He felt, also, that the eyes of the audience had been turned on him more than once during the sermon, for his continued opposition to the pastor of his church. Now he was angry with himself and all the world. In his suit of Sunday broadcloth, with his big ivory-headed cane held in front of him, Ketchum defied church precedent and sat bolt upright.

Martin, filled with the desire to include all men in his invocation, asked for divine mercy, as from a personal God.

"Oh, our Heavenly Father," he pleaded, with eyes closed and face upturned, his hands folded before him on the sacred Word, "we beseech Thee, in Thine own good time, even as the inspired prophet has said, to help the oppressed. Our land is groaning with the burdens of millions to whom the Bible is denied by our inhuman laws. Let Thy light shine; and we pray Thee to strike the shackles from the hands of the oppressed in this fair country, and let the slave go free. We pray Thee—"

Ketchum jumped to his feet, every muscle in his gaunt form trembling in wrath.

He struck his cane on the floor with a resounding whack. His voice rang out:

"We've had enough of niggerism in this church! If you've got any of God's word, give it to us."

A rustle of amazement ran through the house like a wave as every head was lifted.

Martin sprang from his knees, and with one whirling gesture dashed the Bible open.

"God's word?" he cried. "Then here it is: 'He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.'"

He stood for a moment with arm uplifted. A deathlike silence reigned. Slowly he brought his arm down with finger pointed directly at Ketchum, and held the man abashed at the unexpected condemnation.

Under the blaze of Martin's eyes, Ketchum seemed to shrivel.

"Hi!" shouted some one in the gallery. "You can't fool with Martin Brook. He knows the Bible from which to t'other!"

A murmur of approval almost like applause sounded in the church, as the people looked up and saw Eph Larrabee trying to sink out of sight behind the back of a pew. "Gosh!" he said, in a frightened tone, "come near forgettin' where I was!"

Chapter XI

An open rupture in Martin's church followed his rebuke of Ketchum. The official board, led by this man, assumed an attitude of hostility; while, on the other hand, the people, especially the younger members and attendants, were friendly to Martin. Outside of the society, Chichester's influence was felt, and Eph Larrabee expressed a popular sentiment when he said: "Martin Brook's all right. He knows more'n any o' them enemies o' his'n kin pack in a wheelbarrer." A revival was begun early in the winter, and scores of names were added to the roll of probationers. In this sense, Martin was vindicated.

But a condition existed which threatened to create a permanent schism. The Conference — which was held each year in a different town—was announced to meet this spring in Martin's church, at Troy. A quarrel between the official board and the pastor was peculiarly distressing at such a time.

Ketchum attempted to prove Martin in the wrong; but, failing to secure the support of a majority of the people, a great many of whom disapproved of Martin's anti-slavery views, and yet admired him as a man and a fighter, Ketchum resolved on drastic measures. He declared that the board must expel the preacher from this pulpit. He stirred up a spirit of antagonism against Martin, among the business men of the city, in which work he had the maliciously cunning counsel of Graham, his partner in the hat factory at Albany.

A plan was devised whereby the onus of the trouble should appear to rest on Martin, and then he awaited the time for its divulging.

Martin became conscious that there was a secret movement on foot. The official board, who held the power to regulate salaries, decide on the opening of the church edifice on special occasions, and determine all material affairs, now showed a disposition to avoid him. Besides, he felt a growing dissatisfaction in his own mind with the policy of the Methodist Church at large on the question of slavery.

He was in this state of perturbation when the time arrived for the final meeting of the board before the assembling of the annual Conference. His first intimation of the intentions of the board was a remark by one of the members at that session.

"I'm afraid, Brother Brook, that our church is suffering because of your peculiar conduct."

"My peculiar conduct?"

"Yes," said Ketchum. "Your unministerial and unchristian conduct."

"Will you explain your meaning?" Martin demanded.

"I mean that I'm goin' to prefer charges against you at the Conference," Ketchum answered.

"Without first allowing me a hearing before this local body?"

"No," said the presiding elder. "You can make your statement."

"My statement?" Martin said. But in a moment he was calm. He realized the need of self-possession.

"I have always meant well," he said; and, as in a vision, he saw himself back in Judge Northcote's library, responding to the question of right and wrong. "I can see now that I have erred in several respects. But my usefulness is not ended. This society has not suffered under my ministry, nor will it suffer. We have had a glorious revival of religion, and have added many souls to the church. When I came here, I was determined to say but little on the subject of slavery. My reception was not cordial." He looked Mr. Ketchum in the eye. "I was, perhaps, too hasty in my feelings, when the subject of my political views was brought up in an unlooked-for and inexcusable manner. This brother took the highest proscriptive grounds. He has since then gone so far as to forbid me to speak on the theme at all. I cannot permit any man to dictate a course in my ministerial capacity. But I admit that instead of giving him a mild reply, as I ought to have done, I answered him sharply, impulsively — I may add, convincingly — that Sunday from the holy desk. Therein I erred, so far as Christian courtesy is concerned, but not in the propounding of a truth. Since that time, this brother has raised a mighty storm against me. By the grace of God, and through the aid of my personal friends, some of whom are not members of the church—"

"Why don't you convert Chichester?" Ketchum sneered.

"Mr. Chichester says publicly he does not join our connection because *you* are a leading member of it," Martin flashed.

"Oh!" said one of the trustees, smiling behind his hand.

"That isn't a very Christian spirit," another member remarked, frowningly.

"True," Martin replied, quickly, "and I beg Brother Ketchum's pardon. I regret my retort. I censure no one but myself. It is not for me to correct the errors of others. My own I deeply deplore. But on one point I wish to be distinctly, clearly understood: I deem it right and my duty to oppose slavery. Heaven forbid that I shall cease to oppose it while I live and the curse exists. And in order to do this without endangering the church of my choice, I am resolved to retire from this pulpit next May, when my year expires. Brothers, I bid you good-day."

He started to leave the room.

"Hold on," said Ketchum. "That won't do. Of course we won't let you come back here another year, but we want you to understand that you can't preach ab'lishionism in this pulpit while you do remain—from now till Conference."

Martin paused. "I shall preach God's word, Brother Ketchum, now and hereafter."

"Does that mean your fanatical politics?" Ketchum demanded, shutting his lips tightly.

"You, of all men, should know what the Word declares," Martin replied, a glitter in his eyes. "Some of those utterances may not be agreeable to you."

"Then we shall close this church," Ketchum asserted, "until the Conference meets, and meanwhile stop your salary."

"And attempt to deprive me of my pulpit?" Martin asked.

"Your pulpit? Do you think you own this church?"

"I was sent here by the Troy Conference," Martin said, in a calm, even tone, "without seeking the appointment—"

"Humph!" said Ketchum. "Graham told me all about that—about Chichester and you putting your heads together and wire-pulling."

"It is false!" Martin declared. "But I shall not discuss that point. I was saying that I came here in obedience to my superiors in authority. The annual Conference is a higher power than this local Conference. You, as a board, cannot remove me from *my* pulpit, and can only prefer charges against me."

"We'll do that, too, when the time comes!" cried Ketchum.

"You can prefer no charges that I shall be unable to confute," said Martin; "but until I am removed by the higher Conference, I shall continue to preach in this pulpit. Let that be clearly understood. The church law is on my side." He walked quickly from the room.

"We'll show you about that," said Ketchum.

And he carried out his threat. For on the following Sunday Martin appeared at the church only to find the doors locked and a placard posted, announcing that no services would be held here until the assembling of the annual Conference.

A crowd had gathered in the street.

Martin turned his face towards this standing congregation and preached to it from the church steps. He alluded briefly and regretfully to the contest now waging. But his trials were merely beginning. Within a week he was forced to bear a personal loss. Chichester came to him at the parsonage, with the announcement of a change in business.

"I'm awfully sorry," Chichester said, "to tell you that I'm going away—going out to Michigan to live. My lumbering interests require my attention. I hate to leave you to fight this thing out alone, but you can always count on me as a friend."

"I shall feel lonelier than ever," Martin said. "You are my strongest friend, and your going decides one point: I shall not only leave this charge, but withdraw from the Methodist Church."

"And the ministry? Then why not go to Michigan with me and try the law—try business—anything that gives you freedom? I'll help you get on your feet."

"No," said Martin, with a sigh, "my work is in the ministry. The Wesleyan Church is right on the slavery question—that society offers me a pulpit and a refuge."

"But it's poorer than one of its own church mice. You'll starve—"

"I seem in a fair way to that end now," Martin replied, with a sad smile. "You know that the board has stopped my salary. But the Lord will provide."

Chichester sprang up in his impulsive way. "I admire your pluck and faith," he cried, "but—*confound* your judgment! The Lord seems to be providing for the other fellows just now."

"Providing for their destruction," Martin said, solemnly.

The men clasped hands. "God bless you!" Martin exclaimed.

"Your blessing suits *me* well enough," Chichester declared. "I want to see Mrs. Brook a minute." They went down to the sitting-room. "Good-bye, Mrs. Brook," Chichester said. "Martin will tell you what this means—I can't. But here's a little letter I wrote for Tommy, about the big black bears out in Michigan. My address is inside—inside the letter, not the bears, I mean. Don't forget me."

And he was gone before Mary could utter more than an amazed "Good-bye." She opened the unwafered letter and found two fifty-dollar bank-notes. She looked at Martin through swimming eyes. "What *does* this mean?"

The closing of the church doors was a disheartening matter to Martin; but when the second Sunday came and he found even the iron gates in front of the church locked, the spirit of the Crusader was aroused in him. He preached to the people in the street, standing on the steps of a private residence. And, as he stood there, a mob of men came running down the street, driving him back into the shelter of the doorway, and breaking up the meeting with yells and laughter.

Still he persisted, and spoke whenever and wherever he was permitted to gain an audience, until, at last, the annual Conference opened at once its sessions and the church doors.

Ketchum was in evidence now, with his charges of "unministerial conduct."

In the midst of profound excitement Martin was summoned before the Conference for trial. From the start he saw that his case was pre-judged. He was practically denied the right of defence. He scorned to meet the paltry issue of personal misdemeanor, and demanded a public hearing on the real cause, but he was met on every hand by a studied refusal to grant him the right of the floor. He was known to be a master of parliamentary usage; he had acquired this knowledge under Northcote's instruction, at a time when the judge regarded him as a possible actor in national affairs, and his skill as a debater was acknowledged by all who knew him. Now he put that information into practice. By adroit insistence he compelled a recognition by the presiding bishop, and for one hour he held the Conference in silent admiration of his eloquent and lucid exposition of his case. He scattered the arguments of his opponents like chaff and exposed their reasons for persecuting him. Then, while the spell of his plea was still upon his hearers, he demanded a vote. His colleagues, although differing on the main issue of slavery, perceived the justice of his individual cause.

With a unanimous voice the Conference ruled: "Not guilty of unministerial conduct."

But, when he had triumphed over those who sought his expulsion from the Conference in disgrace and on false charges, under disciplinary laws, he still remained unalterable in his decision to leave the Methodist Church. Having been restored, by the action of the Conference, to his pulpit for the remaining Sunday of his year in Troy, he announced his final sermon.

On that last day the church was thronged, and, in the moment of silence following his sermon, in which he had made no allusion to his own affairs, he closed the Bible, stepped to the side of the reading-desk, and said:

"We are living in the Dark Ages of American existence. Future generations will point to us, as a people, when our individual names are forgotten of men, and say: 'Could such things be?' They will scan the pages of our national history with shuddering amazement. Thereon they will find the record of a monstrous crime, and there they will read the names of men we now call 'famous,' but with loathing. They will marvel among themselves that, in the middle of the nineteenth century, after Christ's message has been for ages comprehended by millions, there were those to whom the Bible was a proscribed book—those who were not permitted to learn how to read the Word of God. And they will turn in blank astonishment from the recorded fact that Church and State united in reprobating the acts of those who indulged in the public agitation of the interests of the American slave. The pulpit and the press are muzzled. We are living in a time when freedom of speech is but an empty mockery. We are under a tyranny impracticable since the days of Nero. We sit like graven images, deaf to the cries of human victims and dumb from fear. I, for one, shall continue to speak, not alone in behalf of the slave as a rational and immortal being, but against these our own intelligent people who are persisting in this national disgrace. Our Church is guilty in the sight of God. History will declare it, and men will wonder at our turpitude.

"My friends—for some of you are my friends, tried and true—my voice falters, for my heart is wrung. I stand here to say farewell to you and to the Church I have loved so long; for which I have sought, as God has given me strength, to do some little good. I shall leave the Methodist Episcopal Church, and take up my calling in that society which bears the name of our venerated Wesley. He hated slavery as I hate it. Perhaps within the lines of that organization I shall be welcome, for I am not welcome here. Before God, I am guiltless of sin, and yet I am not held blameless here in this the house of God. Why? Because I am, and shall ever remain, an uncompromising abolitionist! Farewell!"

He sat down.

Sobs were heard. There was a shuffling sound of the relaxing of tense muscles. Men looked in men's faces with questionings. A word, and the people would have risen in open protest at Martin's withdrawal. But the instant passed. There was no leading member who dared to defy public sentiment.

And a few days later, when from the same pulpit the Conference minutes were read, these lines were found:

"*Question*—Who have withdrawn from the connection this year?

"*Answer*—Martin Brook."

"The change has come," Martin wrote to Chichester, in Michigan. "I am without a church. I have taken up the lance. I am at last a 'Crusader.' Mary and I have moved from the Methodist parsonage, to make way for my successor. We are living in a little cottage on Ida Hill. People whom I befriended in former days now pass me by unnoticed. I am forgotten by the busy world."

But he was not forgotten or blamed by Mary. She burnished his shield with the hand of love, and girded on his sword with a tenderness that bound her very soul into the armor — pure, glowing, spotless soul that it was!

Oh, the sweet patience of that dear woman! She held his hands clasped close in hers and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. She could not comprehend the meaning of duty precisely as he did; and her mother-heart was sometimes divided on the question of his duty to those nearest him. But she loved him as he was—with whatsoever error there might be in his judgment—she loved him for the love he gave to her—a woman's highest ideal of love.

Many a night, when he was away from the little house, on an errand of mercy to escaping slaves, she sat eagerly watching for him, their babe in her arms, dreading some calamity. The prescience of a nature keenly attuned to the invisible forces of the unseen world brought to her the agony of apprehensiveness. She knew that he had joined Eph Larrabee and the little band of abolitionists in their secret work. She knew how fierce the feeling was in the town, and she dreaded lest Martin should do or say something to bring on him a personal outrage.

No longer the pastor of a popular church, but only the preacher in a rickety chapel in an obscure street, before an audience of poverty-stricken fanatics, cursed as abolitionists, he completed the delivery of that series of sermons he had prepared in Shelburne.

As this defiant work went on, he began to attract attention. The politicians heard of him and frowned.

"Have you heard that fellow who is turning the world upside down?" one man said to his companion.

"No. Who is he? What's he doing?"

"Why, that man Brook—the man who gave up a good appointment to join the fanatics. He preaches down here in a little seven-by-nine. You ought to hear him, though."

"Thank you, but I'm not in sympathy with that cause."

"Neither am I, but he's really worth hearing, just the same."

Because of this spreading rumor, the day soon came when his meetings were declared to be intolerable by the pro-slavery party. Disturbance of his services was encouraged. Men rose in the crowded pews and interrupted him, only to be argued down, amidst the derision of the believers in the doctrine of freedom.

His personal safety was menaced, but it was not until warning letters and open threats of violence were sent to his house that Mary's alarm became positive terror.

"Don't worry, Mary," Martin said. "No one will harm me. These anonymous letters are the work of cowards."

"I know that, Martin, but it is the coward who strikes in the dark."

"Then I must preach more boldly and defy them. We should not fear the arrow that flieth by night."

"I shall go with you," she said, "whenever you go out at night. They may respect a woman."

One Sunday night, however, just after a strenuous demand for silence had reached him, Mary was too ill to go to the chapel with him; and as he started alone from the house he was overtaken by a stranger, who drew him aside into the shadow of a building.

"Mr. Brook?" the man inquired.

"That is my name," Martin said. "What do you want?" He was suspicious, and put himself on the defensive, compelling the stranger to step into the open street, where the moonlight revealed his unprepossessing features.

"We're holding a meeting down yonder," the man said, in a whisper, nodding towards the river, "and we want you there. You belong to the U. G.?"

"The what?"

"Underground, you know. We are moving some goods."

"I am not a member of your organization," Martin said.

"Well, join us. That's what we want."

"No. I never join a secret society of any kind," Martin replied.

The man drew away. "Well, anyhow, you must help us. We've got a batch of niggers, and I guess the officers are watching us."

"I will do all I can, in my own way, but not a step will I take at the order of a stranger."

"Oh, you're one of them talkers, eh? Afraid? How about those principles you preach?"

"I am not responsible to you for what I preach or what I do," Martin said, going on towards the chapel, leaving the man, who swore at him.

Martin reached the meeting-house, and had begun his sermon, when his attention was attracted by an alarming sound—the roar of many voices—from the direction of the river. Others heard it too. Several persons in the audience started up and quitted the room. Still he continued his address.

The sound grew louder—nearer. The bellowing took definite form.

"Down with 'em! Down with the black abolitionists!"

A man came running into the church. "They're coming! The mob!" he shouted. "They've caught a lot of runaways, and are going to break up this meeting. Run for your lives!" and dashed out to the street.

For a moment the audience sat immovable with fear.

Then, as one person, they rose and crushed their way into the narrow aisles, blocking the passage to the single door. Some clambered over the backs of the pews, in their wild plunge for escape.

In the street, those who had sat nearest the door, and were now outside, turned in curiosity to watch the struggling people in the doorway. They blocked the egress.

Within the church, a screaming, fighting mass of frenzied humanity wedged itself about the exit, trampling women and children underfoot.

Martin stood on the pulpit platform, his arms lifted and beating the air, as he motioned the heedless crowd to sit down. His voice was lost in the tumult. A howling roar outside, answered by shrieks and shouts of command, increased the terror of the imprisoned crowd.

A shower of stones came smashing through the windows, extinguishing the lamp on the pulpit and all but one candle in the brackets on the walls. The sudden darkness added to the terror of the fighting crowd.

Some of the people were hit, and their cries increased the babel in the church.

"Down with the abolitionists!"

The rioters tore the window-sashes from their fastenings and flung them crashing into the room. They forced an entrance.

"There he is!" a voice cried.

The window nearest the pulpit gave way before a swinging blow, and a man leaped to the floor. He rushed up the platform, took Martin in his arms, dragged him to the window, struggling and fighting for his life; shoved him out into the darkness, and dropped down beside him.

"Quick! Run!" he said.

"Eph Larrabee!" Martin exclaimed. His rescuer laid a hand on his mouth, pushed him in the shadow of the church, and so, along the lane, vaulting a fence and doubling about in their tracks, into a vacant barn, just as the mob came streaming down the alley.

Eph Larrabee darted out, raised his head above the fence, shouting, "There he goes!" and ran towards the street. He led the mob across intervening lots and down another street, yelling back over his shoulder, urging them to follow him.

The rioters ceased their assault on the church and joined in the pursuit of anything—it mattered not who or what. The sight of a fleeing figure, one of their own number, perhaps, would send them hooting on again.

Eph found an opportunity to evade them; and, now that the street before the church was clear, cautiously returned. The place was deserted. By the light of the remaining candle he dimly saw the ruin the mob had wrought. The door was wrenched from its hinges. Every window was broken. The walls were bespattered with mud.

Eph blew out the light and crept around to the barn. "Martin," he said, in a low voice.

Martin came into view. "Is that you, Eph?"

"Yes. Come with me. Them devils is gone. We must go up to your house and get the wife and baby and take 'em over to my house. The mob's got off the track, but I guess you'll be safer visitin' fur a spell."

They went on silently and rapidly through the ominously silent street. They could hear the bellowing of the rioters in the distance.

Mary had heard the sound. She was out at the gate, wild with anxiety.

"Martin," she sobbed, as he took her in his arms.

"There has been trouble," he said. "Don't be frightened. It's all over. I am not hurt. Eph saved me. He thinks we will be safer at his house. Get baby, and we will go at once."

Chapter XII

FORTUNATELY for the city, the passions of the mob soon burned themselves to ashes.

The day following the riot was bright with sunshine. The city was amazed that such a tragedy could have occurred within its orderly limits.

But there was a general feeling that the incitement to such acts should be done away with in a community that boasted obedience to the law.

Martin Brook was gravely censured. He was waited on by a delegation of prominent men, who told him emphatically that he must stop agitating the people with his sermons.

"Gentlemen," Martin replied, "in whose name do you speak?"

"We speak in our own individual names, sir."

"You have read the Constitution, of course. By what right do you prohibit freedom of speech, pulpit, or press?"

"Why, Mr. Brook," one of the delegation urged, "we are not attempting to interfere with your religious services, but as a matter of expediency we suggest a more moderate tone."

"Expediency!" Martin said, with profound scorn. "For the sake of possible commercial gain, you are willing to abate your rights as law-makers and accept dictation from the Southern slave-holders. I shall preach what I believe to be the truth. Not one of you dares to meet me in public argument. You close the doors of your halls against me, but I still have a pulpit."

"The peril rests with you, sir," the leader answered.

It was a peril. Martin could see a form of reason in the public demand. For the cause of the riot, he learned to his discomfiture, was the attempted passage of the band of slaves mentioned to him by the stranger who had stopped him on the way to the chapel. This man, a professional agitator, who made his living by such means, was carrying on the trade of assisting runaways, taking whatever he could get from the anti-slaveryites. He was not, like most of the "Underground Railroad" men, sincere, self-sacrificing, and honest; but simply a trafficker in the necessities of these poor wretches. He was known as a "freedom contractor," and Martin was willing to admit that both his own and the public's instinctive aversion to such a man was justifiable in fact.

The man had been tracked and his movements discovered. His "passengers" were overtaken and captured, though he escaped; but the mob, when once aroused, had sought to exterminate all abolitionists at a single blow, and, as the most generally known anti-slavery advocate in the place, Martin had come first to the leaders' minds. They assaulted the chapel because of its availability.

Thus it was that Martin stood between two fires: the pro-slavery government, backed by the commercial element, on the one hand, and the ultra-fanatical and unprincipled abolitionists on the other.

While he never refused aid to an escaping slave, he assumed the firmer ground of legal, peaceful argument, whereby men might become convinced of the error of slavery through intellectual and moral education.

It was at this moment in his life that the pressure of ostracism became almost unendurable. His family was suffering from a lack of the comforts, even the necessaries, of life; and Mary's uncomplaining acceptance of his sense of right was the bitterest trial of his soul. At times he wavered. He was in poverty, dependent on the charity of such friends as the Larrabees and Chichester. He had wellnigh reached the border-land of despair when, one day, he came upon an essay on "Moral Fortitude" which Judge Northcote had written for the Sandy Hill *Sentinel* in those happy days at Elmhurst. It was in the form of a clipping, which Mary had saved and placed between the leaves of a book which he had never chanced to open. It was so full of the true spirit of the judge as Martin alone knew it, so filled with genuine kindliness, that the essay moved him deeply. Yet, at the same time it strengthened his resolve for the Cause. Again and unconsciously the conservative Northcote had fostered the radicalism he had labored so hard to avert.

Martin fell to musing. The judge must be a lonely man. Why not write him frankly, admitting his own love? He could, without sacrifice of principles or dignity, say something that might cheer the solitary man sitting in the magnificent desolation of Elmhurst.

He obeyed this impulse and wrote a letter from his heart. He did not tell Mary, half in fear of the result, and secretly hoping to be able to bring a ray of cheer into her life.

Days passed, but no answer came. He had dismissed the hope of hearing from the judge, when Eph Larrabee came running into the house.

"Martin, have you seen this?" he called out, holding up a copy of the Sandy Hill *Sentinel*.

Martin took the paper, as Mary stepped to his side. Before he could turn the sheet away from her, she had read the heading of the article.

"Judge Northcote!" she exclaimed.

There was no evading it now. He read aloud:

"'DEATH OF JUDGE NORTHCOTE

"'We stop the press, to announce with profound regret to our readers the startling intelligence of the death of Judge Northcote, of Elmhurst, the foremost personage in our village.

"'Our wealthiest and most distinguished citizen, who was famed beyond the borders of our county for his learning and many other admirable qualities of head and heart, passed suddenly away from this life, some time during last night. The exact hour of his death is not at present known to us, but his departure to the Great Unknown was attended with remarkable incidents.

"'From the scanty information now obtainable, owing to the excitement at Elmhurst, we are enabled to collect the following authentic, though meagre, facts:

"'As is well known to our readers, Judge Northcote was, in his lifetime, possessed of a vast estate. He was never married. The late Mrs. Margaret Wright, who died without surviving issue, was his only known relative. The judge, therefore, leaves no direct heir or near kindred.

"'Some years ago he designed adopting a son, but owing to a misunderstanding between them, this intention was not consummated. We allude to this circumstance, not to revive painful memories, but because of its bearing on the incidents of our esteemed townsman's death.

"'It now transpires that Judge Northcote, on the departure of this young man, bequeathed his entire estate, real and personal, to the great institution of learning of which he was an honored alumnus. Being a lawyer of acumen, this document was prepared by his own hand and duly attested. Its validity, in every detail, is indisputable.

"'It appears, from the evidence thus far procured, that only a few days since a letter was received by the judge (the circumstances justify this allusion) from the man he designed making his heir, and who is, we believe, a minister in the Wesleyan connection. The letter evidently made a strong impression on the mind of the noble man, who was ever open to the appeals of the needy. It also seems to have influenced him regarding the disposition of the estate. At all events, this morning, when the housekeeper (an old and faithful *attaché*) and the judge's body-servant became alarmed at not receiving a summons from their master, they opened the library door and entered the room.

"'The judge was seated at his table, as in the act of writing. His head reclined on the table. The servants thought he was asleep. They sought to arouse him.

"'Judge Northcote was dead!

"'Beneath his still, cold hand lay an unfinished letter. It began and ended thus:

"'"MY DEAR SON, — Long ago I forgave you the seeming injustice to me. I have loved you, and watched your career with deep solicitude. When you wrote me before the death of 'little mother,' I was still hard of will, but her last words melted the ice about my poor heart. Come back to me, Martin! I will try to make amends for my harshness. I am a broken, lonely old man, but I love—"

"'It is easy to conjecture to whom the judge was addressing this letter, and its character is made all the more remarkable by the fact that it reveals his latest intentions. For upon the table lay a new will, annulling the previous one, and bequeathing the entire estate to Martin Brook.

"'But this new will is unsigned and unwitnessed. The first one is, therefore, the valid document.

"'We transgress custom and print this astonishing personal news, because the facts must be made public at the inquest, which is now in session.

"'Later.—Judge Northcote died from disease of the heart. The obsequies will be held day after to-morrow.'"

Still grasping the paper in his hand, Martin got up and walked steadily towards his study door.

Mary held out her arms to him, and followed a step or two, but stopped. She felt that this was a moment when he should be alone, even from her. But Martin turned around at the door and extended his hand. She ran to him.

"Oh, Martin!" she said, and buried her face on his breast.

"I am glad he forgave me," he whispered. "Let me have a moment, dear."

She kissed him. He opened the door softly, as on a death-chamber, and passed in, closing it gently between them. She leaned against the wall, her face hidden, forgetful of Eph.

"'Tain't 's if ye didn't have *no* friends," he said, coming near her.

"Oh, Eph," she cried, "Martin is *so* good! Why has God added this burden to all he has to carry?"

"Well, I ain't able to tell ye that, but I kin say one thing: I'm awful sorry I fetched that paper."

"Oh, that makes no difference," she said, going to little Tommy, as he came shyly into the room. "We should have learned of it some time." She clasped the child in her arms and sobbed. Tommy caught the infection of grief and wailed. The mother-instinct asserted itself. In soothing her babe she gained mastery over herself.

Eph swung his hat to his head with a self-condemning gesture. "S'pose I can't do nothin' jest now, but 's long 's they's life in the egg an' butter trade you sha'n't suffer complete and actual starvation," he said.

"Thank you, Eph," Mary said, as Eph went out.

She rocked Tommy to sleep and laid him on the bed. Then she went to the study door, waited, listened, and knocked gently.

"Is it you, dear? Is Larrabee gone?" Martin asked. She nodded, and went close to him. "Come," he said, putting his arm around her as she stood by his side. "I have been thinking furiously, Mary, these few minutes. I have wronged you and our child—"

She laid her hand on his lips.

"And still you don't blame me?" he said, taking her hand.

"I am sorry, for your sake," she said.

"That chapter is forever ended," he mused. "From the many good gifts of my old life I have still the one supreme blessing of your love. Let us say no more of what might have been. The future is to-day, and we must live it as best we can. I am going to tell you of an impression that has come to my mind. There is a great spirit of revival going on in this country, but I cannot work in my present field and also work as an evangelist and do my best. What do you say to my taking up evangelistic work solely? It may separate us for a little while, from time to time, but you can go to the Larrabees, and we can make our home with them. It isn't a remunerative field to labor in, but I seem called to enter it. I shall not give up my principles, but we must live; and this new plan offers a living, now that I have no church."

"I will agree to any plan you make," she said.

"But it doesn't seem to be my own plan," he returned.

"Call it a leading, Martin," she said.

"It is a guidance, dear one, but not towards earthly gain," he said.

"We are not seeking riches here," she answered.

And Martin Brook, evangelist, touched the souls of men; preaching the doctrines of Wesley, and winning the love, the admiration, and the respect of all. It was a consolation to him to feel that he had never differed in creed with the fathers of the Church of his first choice. His only contention was in the policy of the Church regarding American slavery. That body, confirmed in its pro-slavery attitude, seemed remote and impossible to him; but he held to the spiritual doctrines of the Church with unswerving fidelity.

Seven years of evangelistic work went on. His home was still in Troy; his wife and child were with the faithful Larrabees, and he was winning, from the midst of the general strife, the designation of "the Conscientious."

There was, however, always the undertone of sadness

—the minor chord of loneliness—in the life he led. He missed the privilege of being called a Methodist.

And so, when, after a great revival under his ministrations at Bennington, the people asked him to return to the charge of their church, he hurried back to Mary with the welcome news.

"Mary," he said, "they want me to go back into the dear old Church. I haven't sought this. They know that I haven't given up my anti-slavery principles, and yet they ask me to become their pastor."

"Go wherever the people call you, Martin," she said. "Return to the regular ministry and our old Church."

Once more his name was entered on the lists; once more he felt the cordial hands of friends and brothers.

"Now I am at home," he said. "I shall be prudent. The Lord has guided me into pleasant ways. I will keep the bishop's advice in mind—grand man that he was!"

But as he settled calmly, and with a patient heart, into the placid life of his new pastoral charge, thankful for a moment's respite from the fight, he was startled into action by a cry of alarm.

President Fillmore had signed the Fugitive Slave Bill!

Chapter XIII

In the presence of this new summons, the preparations for debate which Martin had made at the outset of his career stood him in good stead as the ensuing years of agitation passed fiercely on. Taking the Bible as the text-book for nations, and the ballot as the instrument of progress, he declined to be led by those political reformers who declared the compact of the Union to be "an agreement with hell and a covenant with death," but reaffirmed his advocacy of an enduring national union through an intellectual crusade. In reply to his critics — there were many of these in the several charges to which he was successively appointed in accordance with the "two-year" plan of his Church—Martin said:

"I am not taking partisan politics into the pulpit. The anti-slavery cause is a religion. My vote is my sword. We owe as much to the nation as to the Church. The Scriptures are our guide to right conduct as a people—they teach us national morality. We are a growing, not a completed, nation; and our future greatness turns on the question of our obedience to the moral laws in our relations with men, no less than on our spiritual enlightenment in our relations with God. These qualities are co-ordinate. We must perform the acts of righteousness in the flesh if we would see the rewards of righteousness in the spirit. We are made by law a nation of slave-hunters, and the sole argument for American slavery is that it is a commercial necessity.

The only method of maintaining slavery is by injustice —the assuming that one race of men should be treated as Things. Because of these facts, I take the educational work of reform into the pulpit, the one place at my command, and therein advocate a better comprehension of the truth."

Thus, in spite of the opposition of his official boards, and sustained by an ever-increasing popularity as a preacher, Martin persevered in his course.

Sometimes his zeal carried him into the active field of politics—not as a partisan, but as an advocate of the one idea.

He had preached a sermon which angered the proslavery element, and one of his hearers demanded the right to reply. Martin assented to this proposition of a joint debate. It was at the time of a fiercely fought national election, and the church board refused to allow the use of the church for the meeting. A scheme was thereupon concocted to get Martin into a position where his opponents would have him at every disadvantage. He was challenged to take up the discussion in a small settlement not far from the spot where Jacobs lived in the days of Martin's bondage.

This suggestion appealed to Martin's imagination. The thought of arguing for freedom almost on the site of his own serfdom fired him to new energy. He accepted the challenge, but he did not know that plans had been laid to break up the meeting and treat him to the personal indignity of a coat of tar and feathers.

In order to reach the school-house near Lake George, where the outrage was to be perpetrated, a ride by stagecoach was necessary.

Martin secured a place on the coach, on the appointed day. He was accompanied by only one friend. He chose the top seat—a wide one at the centre of the stage, large enough for three persons. His own place was at the left; his friend was to sit next him; and the third space was assigned to a man whom Martin knew as one of the leading pro-slavery politicians of the town.

On the seat back of them were places for a young woman—evidently a nurse-maid—and a child, a bright, attractive little girl of eight or nine.

As they were taking their places, Martin lifted the child and was in the act of handing her to the maid, when the little one, in the tone of a petted favorite, declared:

"I'm going to sit by this gentleman."

"That seat is taken, Helen," the nurse explained.

"Oh," said Martin's friend, "if she wants it, I'll sit back here, Mr. Brook. Let the little girl stay where she is."

"I will take care of her," Martin remarked to the nurse, as they settled down for the ten-mile ride. "I am very fond of little girls. And so your name is Helen?"

"Yes, sir; Helen Stafford Graham. I'm going to the big hotel. My mamma is there. Are you going to the hotel, too?" But Martin did not answer. "What makes you so still?" she asked.

"Nothing that you would understand," he said, smiling gravely. "No, I am not going to the hotel."

He took one of the black curls and drew it gently through his fingers.

"Helen Stafford's child!" he mused; "and, by a strange ordering, I am her guardian for an hour!"

As they rushed along, the stage jolting and swaying, he saw that little Helen was growing restless. He tried to interest her in the objects about them; but after a time she slipped down from the hard seat and stood on the roof of the stage, leaning against Martin's knee. He put his arm about her, while she chattered to him and sang bits of song.

In her features—the dark eyes and black hair, the rosy cheeks—and in her self-assertiveness, he saw her mother reproduced.

"I like you," the child said, looking frankly into his face. "Will you come and see me?" but before he could reply, her sharp eye had discovered a small ornament attached to the plain black silk watch-cord that encircled his neck. "What is that?" she asked. "Is it gold?"

She took Enoch's Underground Railroad token in her hand.

"No," he said, "it is brass—a token, we call it. I don't think I can explain its meaning to you. I wear it because of the idea it represents, not its intrinsic value."

"I wouldn't wear a *brass* charm," she declared.

Martin smiled. He looked at the stranger next him, expecting a responsive smile, but the man was frowning.

"I don't think any man should wear that thing," the man said. "I know what it is: your abolitionist badge of defiance of the law."

"Pardon me for differing with you," Martin replied. "It was given me by a friend; one who did me a great service, although his skin is black."

"We do differ, sir, on many points," the man continued. "I heard your sermon Sunday, and I must say I disagree with you. My business takes me about the country a good deal, South and North. Your attitude on slavery is wrong—pernicious. You are harming business, sir, and I must beg permission to say so. I'm going out to hear your talk to-night."

"That is your privilege," Martin said.

"I think it a mistake, more than that, an abuse of the pulpit, to carry politics into the sacred desk. You may find out some day that people don't want that sort of thing."

"Again we differ, sir."

"You abolitionists are ruining the country," the man went on, hotly, evidently trying to make Martin angry.

"How can that be when we are only pointing out the evils that exist? It is my duty to preach against sin. If you listen to me to-night, perhaps I shall convince you of this fact."

"Yes," his opponent replied, "I expect to hear some rather loud talk. You may hear it, too." He smiled. "You'll find out that these 'evils,' as you call them, exist by law—constitutional statutes and divine law," the man asserted.

"I grant the first clause, but not the last," Martin answered. "Divine sanction of slavery is not to be found."

"You abolitionists are a pack of fanatics," the man cried, in passion. "You are nigger-stealers, law-breakers, cowards, every one of you."

Helen nestled closer to Martin, trembling with fear.

Martin's face had grown pale. He opened his lips to reply, but at that instant, as the coach was rounding a high ledge of rock about which the narrow, sideling, stony road ran abruptly, with a deep ravine on the right-hand side masked by a growth of evergreens, a stray dog jumped from the thicket and frightened the nigh leader, causing him to spring, slip and fall, dragging his mate down. The heavy wheelers were instantly upon them, plunging furiously. The coach lurched into the ledge and the near wheels bounded on a shelf, careening to the right. The lines slipped through the driver's hands. He threw his legs over the side of the box, shouting, "Hold fast!" and leaped down, as the ponderous coach poised a second or two on its right wheels and then toppled towards the ravine.

There was barely space between the track and the ravine to contain the coach. The maddened horses, breaking from their harness, were dashing on each other, but had not time to turn before the driver was at their heads.

As the coach settled, Martin grasped the rail with his left hand and tried to catch little Helen in his right, when, with a cry of terror, she leaped into the air, out over the edge of the cliff, among the trees.

Martin landed on his feet, unharmed, at the very edge of the precipice. He looked about him quickly, saw that the nurse-maid was lying in a faint beside him, and that none of the passengers was seriously injured.

But the child was beyond his reach, upheld by the vibrating branches of a cedar that projected straight from the rock, and hung suspended over an abyss. He discovered that he could not rescue her by going out along that tree—it would not hold them both—and at the same glance he perceived another tree, that shot its gnarled trunk parallel to the one she was in.

He got down on his hands and knees and moved slowly over the cliff, calling: "Don't be afraid, Helen. Hold on with both hands. I'll help you."

He felt the tree bend beneath his weight, and heard a snapping of its roots. He saw that he could not reach her, but that her dress was caught in the ragged twigs of the tree. He discerned that she was not in immediate peril if she remained quiet; he knew that he had a moment's respite for thought of how to save her.

Meanwhile the passengers, escaped from the wreck, were standing breathlessly on the bank. Below, at a depth of sixty feet or more, they saw, as Martin did, the bed of a stream, now dry and filled with jagged rocks. A fall into that chasm meant death.

Martin laid his length along the tree, distributing the strain over the several crooked branches. He realized that, if the roots held firmly, he could rescue the child.

Without turning his face, he called to the men on the bank:

"Get the lines from the harness. Make a running noose. Find a long pole and shove that noose out to me."

An awful period of silence ensued. At last he heard his friend's voice: "Here's the line," and the snapping of the twigs as the pole was slowly pushed through the tangle of branches. He grasped the end of the pole and shoved it ahead until it reached the child. Calmly, with a smile, he said to her:

"Now, dear, put that noose over your head, down under your arms—one arm at a time—carefully. Don't hurry. Hold on to the tree with one hand. That's right." Then, calling to the men, he ordered: "Pull steadily."

They drew her towards them; but her clothing clung to the boughs. They lifted both child and tree, until, with one sudden wrench, they brought her safely to them.

But, at the moment of her release, the tree, like a bent bow, sprang back, swishing through the air, striking with terrific force against the tree on which Martin lay.

There was an ominous crackling of the roots. Up and down he swayed. A cry of horror burst from those who watched him as the tree settled sharply, but still remained embedded in the rocky soil. He hung, head downward, over the cliff. Fragments of earth and stone went bounding through the trees to the bottom of the ravine. Martin closed his eyes and uttered a word of prayer for strength and courage.

The lessons he had learned as a boyish athlete came to mind, but his unpractised muscles seemed unable to respond to his will. Cautiously he raised his body, inch by inch, guiding his feet by the sense of touch, along that tree, breaking the entangling twigs. Calmly he spoke once more: "Don't touch me till I get my feet above the edge." He felt his strength failing him—he made one final effort. His foot touched the projecting rock.

"Now!" he cried.

They grabbed him and drew him upward.

He lay exhausted on the ground beside them.

The stranger, who had denounced him but a moment since, stood by him, with hands clasped in an agony of relief.

"My God!" he cried. "I called that man a coward!" He leaned over Martin. "Mr. Brook, I was planning a most despicable outrage. I believed you deserved it. We were going to break up your meeting. Can you forgive me?" He took Martin's hand as he knelt beside him.

"You see, God rules," said Martin. "Yes, I forgive you, but you must ask God to forgive your injustice to humanity."

"You have convinced me," the man said, bowing his head.

Chapter XIV

THERE was movement in the surcharged air.

Men held their breath, not at the rescue of a single man from the peril of a midnight mob, but at the peril of a nation from the conduct of its chosen leaders, while the months went by, bringing their changes to great and small. In the events closest to Martin's life there were some that caused a pang to Mary's gentle heart. She had seen her boy go out into the world; she had given him up, for his own good, and had said good-bye as he started for a new home with Chichester, in that enigmatical West. This friend of earlier days had offered the boy a place in the business that was growing into large proportions among the forests of Michigan, and Mary had yielded to the inevitable.

The years had brought a change also to Martin himself. He was now in charge of a church in Albany.

In the din of coming strife he felt the fighting-blood of his ancestry urging him on to a post nearer the danger-line. The crash of John Brown's death-trap had echoed through the world. Lincoln had moved across the cloudy plane of vision; war had been declared.

The city was astir with sounds of preparation for a conflict whose outcome no man could positively forecast. There were encampments of troops almost within hearing from Martin's windows. Regiments were marching to the front.

Martin's larger field, that he had prayed for in the day of his vague unrest at Shelburne, was now before him, and yet he felt dissatisfaction with his work. His point of view was shifted.

"Mary," he said, with peculiar earnestness, one day, when he had just returned from a religious meeting in the camp, "I feel that I ought to go into the army and help the Cause as far as I am able."

"I think you have done your share already, Martin."

"It is cowardly to foretell a war, and then not go to the front when the war actually comes," he said.

"You have fought the early battles on a higher plane," she said. "You have faced perils that others shrank from, and—and, really, Martin, you are now beyond the military age." She ran her fingers through the thin gray hair and softly stroked his head.

"We never get beyond the age of duty," he replied, with a gentle smile. "Perhaps I feel my position more keenly now, because I have just received a letter from Chichester that almost causes me to regret my poverty. I have nothing to offer my country but myself, while he writes me that he is equipping a company, and shall take it into the field. They ought to make him a colonel, at least, and I believe they will. He writes that he is a personal friend of Governor Blair. But he says very positively that he shall refuse to let Tom join the company, because he is needed in the store. He says—"

"What's that? Tommy?" Mary cried. "Why, Tommy is too young to go in the army!"

"Ah, my dear," he said, holding her hand in his, "that mother-heart of yours! But you say I'm too old. That's a harder accusation to bear—too old!"

She took the letter from the table and read it through. Then, looking up, she said:

"Dear husband, I have never stood in your path of duty. We are growing old together—that we cannot help—but I shall not say anything more."

"I am not qualified to lead a company, and I am too old to be accepted in the ranks, but I am capable of going in the capacity of chaplain. Our men need help."

"Yes," she whispered.

"The regiment is about ready to move," he remarked. "I believe the men would be glad to have me go with them."

"I shall not oppose you," Mary replied.

He went out, confirmed in his sense of duty, and on his way to the Governor's mansion he encountered Dr. Foster, his family physician.

"Good-bye, Mr. Brook," the doctor said, drawing his carriage up at the walk. "I'm going into the service at last."

"Are you? I have decided to do the same thing."

The doctor looked at him a moment. His face assumed a professional aspect. "Are you strong enough to endure army life?"

"Yes."

"Drive back with me to my office," the doctor suggested. "Let's talk it over."

Half an hour later, in the privacy of his office, the doctor said:

"You know we can't let all our good men go to the front, Mr. Brook. I think you can do more and better work right here. There is no immediate cause for alarm in your case, but I find there is a slight—a very slight—affection of the heart. You should avoid excitement. Your sympathetic nervous system seems functionally disordered. Stay right here—you are needed in your present place most of all."

Martin returned home, disappointed, but he did not tell her of the interview with Dr. Foster. He reasoned that there was no occasion for alarming her. But she perceived this reticence and observed him closely; for, ever since that stress upon his vital energies when he rescued little Helen, she had felt, at times, serious alarm concerning his health.

Now she noticed that he said no more about going to the front, but renewed his work in the pulpit and the camp.

"I've found my place at last," he said, shortly after his talk with the doctor. "We are going to organize a relief corps. The society people have taken the matter up, Mary, and they want you to join them. Isn't it strange how God orders our affairs? Here are persons who have never recognized us socially coming and asking our assistance. You'll go, won't you?"

"If I can be of service—certainly." And, side by side with the Schuylers, the Van Rensselaers, and the leaders of fashion, Mary walked calmly on, forgetful of self and social estate, in the establishment of sanitary reforms.

By the merest accident, while engaged in some special duty, Mary learned that one of the society women was about to join them. "Mrs. Sidney Graham," Mrs. Schuyler said, "has been away, but is expected home this week. I am very confident that Mrs. Graham on her return will become a decided acquisition to our executive committee."

"Is Mrs. Graham noted for her charities?" Mary asked.

"Quite so," Mrs. Schuyler declared. "I shall see that you meet her at the earliest possible moment, my dear Mrs. Brook. I hope you will see her at the reception I shall give next month to the New York workers in our cause."

"I have already met her," Mary said, quietly.

"Indeed?" the lady's surprise was slowly filtered through a gold pince-nez. "I had not heard you mention the fact before."

"They are not members of our Church," Mary said.

For several days she did not speak to Martin of Helen Graham's return. The half-fear of reviving painful memories kept her silent. But when Mrs. Schuyler's invitation reached her, she was obliged to speak.

"Have you met Sidney Graham since coming here?" she asked.

"Graham? No," he said, with a slight frown. "He is in business here, with Jabez Ketchum, the man who treated you so outrageously, but I haven't seen either."

"I am glad they don't annoy you."

"I have weightier matters to occupy my mind. I heard casually that the house of Graham & Ketchum is heavily involved on account of the breaking up of their Southern trade. There are a great many failures occurring in the commercial world because of this repudiation of debts."

Mary hesitated a moment. Ought she to mention Helen's name and so bring up a subject never spoken of by Martin since that night when he had told her of the letter Helen had written thanking him for saving little Helen's life? There was no thought in her heart except to protect him from a possible pang. She handed him the invitation. Perhaps Helen would not be there.

"That's very kind of Mrs. Schuyler, I am sure," Martin said, reading the invitation. "I shall be glad to meet these people from New York."

"Yes, I want you to meet them," Mary replied, "but of course I shall not go."

"Not go? Why, you're invited!"

She smiled. "I haven't anything to wear but my old black silk."

"Black silk? You always look best in that."

"That's because it *is* my best, I suppose. I have worn it to every meeting of the committee."

"Certainly. It was bought for that purpose. Wear it whenever you wish."

"You dear old stupid!" she said, laughing, though the tears were in her eyes. "We are not society people. Those ladies have more than one dress."

"It is you, my dear, not your clothes, who are invited. We have never given much thought to the follies of dress."

"I know that, Martin. I am not complaining. Our Church is made up of plain people; but society ladies think very differently."

"I always wear the same suit—sometimes rather too long to please you," he said.

"There!" she cried, amused. "You have trapped yourself." Then, more seriously: "It's different with you, dear. A clergyman is limited in his dress."

"Yes, and in some other ways, too," he said.

"Now," she said, rising and putting an arm about him, "stop right where you are. You must go, whether I do or not."

"Dress is always a disturber. Our Church is right in opposing vanities."

Martin could not get the thought of Mary's one dress out of his mind, when she had left him. "I really haven't the money to buy her a new one," he mused. But, impressed by a new idea, he at last took his hat and went down-town. When he came back he carried a little parcel in his hand, and went to Mary's sitting-room. There, with a show of pride he might have censured in another, he unwrapped the package and laid before her a handsome lace collar and pair of undersleeves.

"Why, Martin Brook!" she exclaimed. "Where did these come from?"

"Brother Schemmerhorn's store," he said, proudly. "I got to thinking the matter over, dear, and I knew that you wouldn't assent to such a proposition. So, I went down alone, and told him that I couldn't quite afford a dress, but that I wanted something nice for you to wear with a black silk, to a reception, and—"

"I cannot consent to wear *borrowed* things, Martin!" she said.

"Borrowed?" he repeated. "Why, I bought them!"

"Bought them?" she cried, starting up. "Oh, Martin! How could you do it! We can't afford it! We need—"

"There, there, dear," he pleaded. "Please don't spoil my happiness."

"But, Martin, think of the money!"

"Don't you think them worth— Aren't they nice?"

"Nice? They are beautiful — beautiful!" she exclaimed, as she put the collar on over her dark print, and turned about to get the effect of it in the looking-glass. "Of course, this will look very different over black silk, you know. Why, dear, they will make my gown really — handsome!" she said, laughing and crying in the same breath. Then she put both hands on his shoulders and reached up and kissed him. "You are *so* good—so *thoughtful!*"

He sighed. "I wish I were."

A formal reception in fashionable life was an unusual event in the experience of the Brooks. Martin had seen something of this side of life. He had occasionally been asked to perform the marriage ceremony at the homes of the rich, in the unexpected absence of their own pastor, but such incidents were so rare as to justify mention of them in his diary, with a modest statement of the fee received. In one case, he had been given the unprecedented sum of ten dollars in gold. But the rules of the Church, and Martin's conception of the holy rite, made his ceremony too brief and simple to satisfy the requirements of those who desired the use of the ring or the observance of ritualistic forms.

He had also been appealed to, under similar conditions, to pronounce the funeral rites over the remains of strangers; but he shrank from this, more than from the solemn marriage service, with those who were unknown to him. He was too genuine of heart to speak words of idle purport above the dead; too contemptuous of wealth to lose sight of the peril to man's soul through the possession of money — a possession which oftentimes it seemed to him made entrance to heaven an impossibility. Above all, he was much too sensitive to the sufferings of the mourners to speak candidly of the danger of postponing peace in Christ. He could never forget the day when he was asked to speak across the body of a rich man—an infidel; a coarse, brutal, perverted nature—who had ended a profligate career by taking his own life. It would be impossible to conceive of a life more completely at variance with Martin's idea of right living. He was told that several ministers had refused to hold these services; and at the same time he learned that the wife of this wretched victim of destroying passions was a truly noble woman, who had borne her domestic afflictions without a murmur, because, in the inexplicable mystery of the affections, she loved the man who had wrecked her happiness. Martin had consented, but that experience had made him ill for days.

These rare occasions of Martin's professional duty did not, of course, bring Mary into touch with the social side of fashionable life. In her mind, as in Martin's, there lingered memories of Elmhurst; but so many years of privation had intervened that the only sense of domestic customs now remaining came from their Methodist habit of self-chosen simplicity.

For these reasons, the invitation to attend a function at the mansion of the Schuylers held all the elements of disturbance for her gentle soul. She felt instinctively the incongruity of the situation. She knew that this could be only a momentary stepping out of her accustomed path, to go back to the usual and the plain the moment it was done. It was not an invitation to tea at the house of a Methodist, where she could wear her broché shawl and untrimmed bonnet, and talk of those small economies they both were obliged to practice — where the sewing-circle and the Children's Aid Society could be discussed. No; it was a grave, serious, revival of those almost forgotten days with Mrs. Wright and Mrs. Coulter.

But when she saw how happy Martin was at the thought of her being "in her proper place" at last; when she realized his lack of appreciation of society barriers, she bravely waived her own judgment and accepted the invitation.

Dear woman! Because of the modesty of her sweet nature, she did not for an instant comprehend that behind the mask of stateliness there might lurk a pang of envy of her innate unselfishness.

When she came down from her room the night of the reception, and met Martin in their little parlor with a quiet "I'm ready," he looked at her in admiration. He felt, too, a personal sense of pride in those bits of lace that he had bought for her.

"Mary," he said, "you'll be the most distinguished-looking woman in the company."

"I hope I do appear well, for your sake, Martin," she said, as they walked along. Neither of them had thought of taking a carriage; that would have been an undreamed-of extravagance. The idea of such a luxury was not suggested to their minds until they reached the mansion and saw the crowd before the door, though she did not speak of it even then.

But she did feel a fluttering of the heart as they were ushered in by the colored servant, through the crush of arriving guests. The rumble of carriages, the slamming of carriage doors, the glare of lights within the mansion, the murmur of voices made her tremble.

She went impassively with the throng, up to the dressing-room, losing sight of Martin. She felt alone, deserted, strangely out of place among the self-confident, beautifully gowned women, while a maid removed her shawl and bonnet—it seemed so odd to her to be waited upon in this manner.

All of the women about her, crowding before the mirror, in their expansive skirts, with bare arms and scarcely concealed necks, were talking at once; nobody was listening. The seeming lack of courtesy shocked her. There was a rustle of silks, a waving of fans—Mary had not thought of a fan—an adjusting of laces, plumes, and bracelets; a dazzling glitter of jewels, and an ever-shifting picture of bright colors in an atmosphere of delicate, mingled perfumes.

Mary, in her black silk, with high neck and long, flowing sleeves, adorned only by the wide lace collar and sleeves of a preceding fashion, and in the very smallest of crinoline, became conscious that she was not dressed as the other women were—that her finery was out of date! A vague mortification seized her—an unchristian wish for finer dress caused her to shrink back timidly.

She did not know any of the women in the room. Some of them glanced at her, but not one of them spoke to her, except a ponderous near-sighted dowager, who mistook her for a maid, and increased her embarrassment by saying, loudly: "I beg your pardon, I'm sure."

Mary drew a long breath when at last she escaped from the tilting mass of behooped women into the hall, where Martin stood smilingly holding his hand out to her. She clung to his arm, trembling and thankful for his protection. Her only pride now was for him. She looked into his calm, strong face, that seemed so stern but for the tender light in his eyes. She saw the dignity of manner, the grace of movement, the commanding presence, that set at defiance all criticism of his plain black frock-coat and trousers—they were somewhat threadbare at the knees—and made him a leader among men. Her embarrassment was gone. She could hear again his rebuke to a thoughtless man who had once laughed at him for wearing a patched coat: "My honored wife repaired that garment, sir;" and now she whispered to herself: "I *am* his wife!"

They entered the drawing-room at a moment when there was a break in the procession of guests and stood alone before their hostess, who greeted them cordially.

"We owe so much to Mrs. Brook," Mrs. Schuyler said to Martin, holding Mary's hand, and stepping from the line to say:

"Mrs. Graham, here is Mrs. Brook, of whom I spoke."

The woman she addressed turned slowly from before the great marble mantel, with its artistic carvings and huge mirror, which was a part of the scheme of the gorgeous room, and faced them.

For a moment she neither spoke nor stirred, as she studied Martin Brook's wife. Then she held out her hand to Mary.

"Mrs. Schuyler is right," she said, in a low, even tone, with a slightly foreign use of her vowels. "There are very few who do not owe you their love for some kindness, I fancy. But," she added, withdrawing her hand and offering it to Martin, "my personal gratitude is due to you, Mr. Brook. May I offer you my thanks here, in this public place, and at this late day?"

"You have already done that," Martin said.

"No," said Helen, with a gleam of her old-time impulsiveness, "not by my own tongue. You saved my child's life. I merely wrote my thanks."

"There has been no opportunity," Martin said.

"Whatever thanks are due have already been rendered to God."

"Yes?" she questioned. "I am not quite sure that I have done so, although—" She stopped speaking, but took Mary by the hand. "Come," she said, imperiously, stepping back into a corner where a *tête-à-tête* was just then vacated. Then, in a milder, more pleading tone: "Sit down. You won't mind if I hold your hand a minute?" She gently pushed Mary into the seat beside her. She seemed at a loss for words, and said, as if trying to force herself to be calm: "Do you like this sort of thing—this crowd—this superficial life?"

"It is new to me," Mary replied. "I never attended a reception—"

"May I come to see you?" Helen asked abruptly, still looking in her face and not heeding Mary's words. "There is a good deal I want to say." She looked up at Martin. She plainly showed the effect of his gaze as he stood gravely watching her—here in these brilliant surroundings; the swaying mass of people; the white and gold panellings of the room; the prismatic glint of the chandeliers and candelabra; the fashionable attire of light silks and spreading skirts; the color and movement, and the incoherent sound of voices. In all of this he could see the Helen Stafford of the long ago, grown older, with a crown of white hair, beset with diamonds and rubies, a great brooch with a blood-red gem clasping the folds of soft gauze that billowed across her shoulders and ended in a wide fall of rare old lace about her breast; her bare arms circled with bracelets, and her small hands in kid gloves that came up just over the wrist, matching the fairness of her skin.

And yet she was not the woman he had loved. There was an eager, pathetic look in her dark eyes—the only feature wholly unchanged—that revealed a spirit of dissatisfaction—he almost thought of grief. But that could scarcely be in one whose life had known the fulness of ambitions gratified.

In the glance she gave him he saw only an impersonal appeal, without a stir of his pulse, as if he were one who, standing outside her world, might help her; but how, he could not comprehend.

He answered that look as he would have spoken—as he had, indeed, spoken a thousand times—to a soul searching for a truth to cling to and be saved. He was Martin Brook, the evangelist; she only a human soul.

She addressed her words to that responsive look.

"I am coming to see you *both!*" she said.

"And you will bring your daughter?" Mary asked. "I shall be so glad to see her. I know of Mr. Brook's rescue of her."

"Yes," Helen replied. "I want her to meet you." There was a softening of her manner; but at that moment Martin saw a steely glitter come into her eyes, as she rose quickly, said "Good-night" sharply, as if to avert some annoyance. Mary saw this, too, and at the same time, rising, she perceived the cause; but Martin did not, for his back was towards the room.

But before Helen could move away, Sidney Graham came elbowing rudely up to them. He clapped Martin on the shoulder. Martin looked around and recognized him. It was evident to all that he had been drinking to excess. Martin stepped aside. Graham half staggered up to Mary, holding out his hand.

"Ah, Mrs. Brook," he cried, "this *is* a pleasure!"

Mary shrank from him.

"Mr. Graham!" Helen said, reprovingly, taking him by the arm.

"What's the matter, my dear?"

"Mr. Graham is not well," she remarked. "He was indisposed all day."

"Not a bit of it, my dear—not a bit of it. I'm glad to see Mrs. Brook, but I didn't expect to see you, Brook. I fancied you were hanged, along with your friend, John Brown." He laughed foolishly, and turned unsteadily to a man near by. "Say, you Corson—don't you drink all o' that champagne! I got my eye on you!" He left them without another word.

Martin saw the color fade from Helen's face as she bowed slightly, spoke to the hostess, and passed up the stairs.

Chapter XV

AMID the alternating current of hopes and fears, during the first weeks of the Civil War, the individual was lost to sight; the man was merged in the idea. The emotions of a single heart—the grief and shame of a proud woman, the resentment of an insult, the pity of a strong man for a suffering soul, the unspoken sympathy of a hand-clasp—were but incidents that made no ripple on the surface of the mighty flood that engulfed the nation.

In the greater thought of the hour, Martin forgot the minor chord of Helen Graham's pleading promise: "I shall come to see you *both.*" Mary remembered it, but said nothing. She saw that Martin was not troubled by their meeting. His mind was dwelling on that larger task — the task of allaying doubt of the Union cause.

To those more impulsive men who had not learned the lesson of patience as he had learned it, and who feared the outcome of the war, his invariable reply was: "Lincoln is God's agent. We must give him our support. I wish, as you do, that he was less free with jests, and that he held more radical opinions regarding slavery. The time may come when it will be necessary to free and arm the slaves. I pray that God will avert that horror—the vengeance of an oppressed people. But for the present, let us bear this in mind: God did not choose you nor me to the office of leader."

Martin tried to avoid appeals to passion. But there were moments when his words fired the public heart—moments like those that followed the rioting in Baltimore.

Standing in his pulpit, the Sunday evening after the shooting of the Massachusetts troops, Martin had then said:

"If one more drop of Northern blood is shed upon those streets in such a cause, the North will rise *en masse* and wipe out Baltimore!"

He spoke in that low, penetrating tone which Enoch had taught him on the hill-side at Shelburne.

An instant of silence ensued, and then, inspired by a single thought, the audience rose, leaped to the benches—to the backs of the pews—to the railing around the gallery—to the altar steps—wherever foot could cling—and burst into a torrent of assent.

Martin stood powerless to check the demonstration. The people, filling the church to its farthest corners, swayed before him like an ocean wave dashing on the rocky coast of Maine. Men stamped, women waved their handkerchiefs, hymn-books and Bibles were thrown high in the air; the dust rose in clouds. And through it roared the voices of a people in uncontrolled emotion.

Martin lifted both arms and motioned dumbly for silence.

Before him raged a throng mad in revolt at existing conditions. But their anger was not aimed at him, as it was that night in the old Wesleyan chapel.

His face was colorless. He waved a hand across the surging sea of heads and motioned to the leader of the choir.

A deep, protracted note rolled from the organ. There was a sudden lull. Martin's clear voice rang out:

"My native country, thee;
Land of the noble free:
Thy name I love."

A thousand voices caught the tune. Reason was restored.

But now those opening days were past. The war was not ended in thirty days, as so many had boasted it would be. A year had dragged its way along, and Martin was sitting in his study, sore at heart because of Lincoln's persistent evasion of the one great issue. Peace and Union with slavery, or, at most, a compensated emancipation, seemed to be the purpose in the President's mind. The distress in the commercial world was great. New industries were springing up to meet the exigencies of the hour; but men were growing sordid, vulgarly rich, and ostentatious. Old houses, dependent upon Southern trade, and wrecked by repudiation of debts contracted under the lax system of the early times, were going down to ruin. Men were thrown out of employment; there was endless suffering, and no recourse for the idle but enlistment. Nearly every home was saddened with a personal loss of dear ones. And to crown all, there were disasters, jealousies, and discords in the field.

It was at such a moment as this that Mary came quickly into the study one day with an open newspaper in her hand.

"Martin," she said, eagerly, "what do you think has happened?"

"Not another defeat!" he exclaimed. "Don't tell me that!"

"No, it's not war news—something local, here in Albany." She read: "'The well-known and long-established house of Graham & Ketchum, manufacturers of straw goods, has gone down.'"

"Graham & Ketchum failed!" Martin repeated.

"Yes," Mary went on. "Listen, there is worse to come: 'This morning the body of Jabez Ketchum was found in the river. Investigation revealed the fact that his firm was irretrievably involved, owing to complications with Southern houses.'"

"'As ye sow, so shall ye reap,'" Martin said, in a low tone.

"'Mr. Sidney Graham is not in the city,'" Mary continued to read, "'so far as could be learned. It was reported at his office that Mr. Graham started for New York, night before last, to accompany Mrs. Graham to the steamer, which was to sail for Havre to-day. No one at the office could give information regarding Mr. Graham's plans, but it is rumored that he will not go abroad. He has been notified of his partner's death.'"

"Poor Ketchum!" Martin said, rising and pacing the floor. In the thought of this man's appalling end, he forgave the injury the man had done him.

These pages cannot hold the history of the war; their measure is the story of a single soul.

A zealous but a truthful soul, true to itself and to its understanding of a God personal and real. Yet, as the years wore the rough edges of his opinions smooth, this God became to him less punitive, and more fatherly, more loving.

The way he had traversed to reach this new conception was long since faded into the twilight of memory; but from the western mountain-tops, in the rarer atmosphere of tolerance and love, he saw the broader view of men and motives. His horizon now was traced only with the spiritual eye; his way illumined with transcendent Faith.

He still held to the duty nearest his hand—a duty like this which now, at the beginning of the second year of the civil strife, is occupying his mind. He is prepared to speak to the people on Independence Day, not from his pulpit or in the camp, but in the Capitol park. Albany is alive to every patriotic impulse.

Martin was awakened this morning by the clanging of bells and the booming of guns. He went to the window and threw open the green shutters.

"Oh, Martin," said Mary. "Can't you get one more nap? It is not sunrise—you need not be on the grounds before noon."

"It's long after sunrise. The day will be warm." He dressed and stood before the window, watching a group of boys in a vacant lot opposite to him. They were firing a toy cannon and exploding fire-crackers, but his thoughts were on the vaster din in the fair Southland.

"It *is* going to be very warm," Mary commented. "You *must* be careful. Don't go out until the very last minute. Dr. Foster said you ought not to expose yourself to the hot sun or do anything to overexcite yourself."

"I shall be very careful, dear," he said.

"You won't speak long, will you? Promise me that much."

"There are only a few points I wish to make," he replied. "Yes, I promise not to overdo."

He was too disturbed to eat, when Mary called him to breakfast, and broke in upon his reverie. He drank a cup of coffee, but left his food untasted.

"You'll surely be faint before the exercises are over," she pleaded. "Do try to eat—just a little mouthful. See how nice and fresh these eggs are: Maria took special pains with your toast. Can't you?" she urged, as he pushed away from the table.

"Thank you, but I really cannot." He stopped at the door. "You are sure the Gortons will go with you? I hope the seats on the Capitol steps will be well protected from the sun. The speakers' stand is so small that you wouldn't be comfortable there."

"Don't think of me, Martin. We've arranged everything. I shall be right in line with you," she said.

He came back and kissed her. "I'll carry the thought of you to sustain me, dear. Now please let me have an hour of quiet before I go. You must start early. I shall meet the speakers at the Senate Chamber, and stay there until the hour for the addresses."

Under the guidance of her friends, Mary found a place on the south section of the improvised platform that covered the steps of the Capitol. Behind her, the weather-stained old building was bright with flags and streamers, festooned from the great columns of the portico to the rough stanchions of the speakers' stand, which stood at the centre of the wide steps leading to the rotunda. In front of her the gravelled path sloped eastward to the converging point of the park, out through the iron gates, and merged into the abrupt descent of State Street. Low wooden railings marked the line of the path. The sacred precincts of turf between this walk and the high iron fence on either side were open to the trampling feet of thousands. Tables were constructed on the green, in the shade of the trees, and here the multitude was being fed by a corps of voluntary waiters.

State Street, down to Broadway, was ablaze with banners, and the cobbled pavement resounded to the tread of marching groups.

Through the trees, on the right, she caught a glimpse of the Executive Mansion and the homes of the old residents, and to the left, across the park and street, the cold gray pile of official buildings.

The hum of voices about her was lost in the roll of drums and the shrill shrieking of fifes, as the school-children, in their holiday clothes, a tiny flag in each child's hand, filed in through the gateway, marched up to the long table, and stood while they ate. Presently, at a motion of the leader's baton, the childish voices took up the air:

> "Strike, freemen, for the Union;
> Sheathe your swords no more."

Mary was leaning forward, listening to the song, when she was startled by a roar of artillery that shook the windows of the houses near the park, and the clatter of sabres and rattle of horses' iron-shod feet along the street, as a regiment of cavalry lined up along the curb outside the fence, amid deafening shouts by the people.

Down State Street, swinging from Broadway, she saw a regiment of infantry, moving in rhythm to the blare of brass. Up, up, up it came, showing grandly in perspective, amid a swaying mass of humanity, which opened to admit it, and surged behind it, as the regiment came on—the sunlight glittering on the bayonets with dazzling brightness. Manœuvring as it neared the narrow gate, the regiment marched in and stretched in single file up to the stand, on either side of the walk.

A company of Zouaves, in their full red trousers, white gaiters, and jaunty jackets, seemed to drop from the sky—so quickly did it come dashing in, with sabre-bayonets twirling and flashing in grotesque evolutions.

The crowds were wild in demonstrations of delight.

But what pleased her most was a drum-corps of boys, with a gorgeous drum-major in the lead, marching up the path, and ranging in front of the stand, rattling their sticks, tossing them into the air and catching them without loss of a single note.

Mary clapped her hands and joined in the applause.

The children were climbing on the railing behind the living wall of soldiers, perching on the iron fence, and shouting everywhere.

A brass band suddenly stepped out from the rotunda and along a lane of people kept clear by a company of infantry with arms presented, down to the speakers' stand.

A squad of men, surrounding a color-sergeant, emerged from the building, bearing the flag. As he appeared, there was an instant roll of drums, a moment's silence, and then the clear note of a cornet, as the bands took up the air of the "Star-Spangled Banner."

The sergeant advanced to his station to the right of the speakers' desk, waved the silken flag and caught it in a graceful festoon about the ebony staff, and placed it in a corner formed by the stand and the outer railing.

With a shout that changed to a measured burst of song, the people carried the refrain and greeted the officers and guests of the day.

Between the Governor and the Mayor, leading the line of speakers, Mary saw Martin come out on the portico and down to the seats reserved for the official group. He looked across the sea of heads to where she was sitting, nodded slightly and smiled. She pressed her hand to her lips and shyly tossed him a kiss.

The opening ceremonies went on: a prayer; the reading of the Declaration; a brief address of the government officials; music, and singing by the children.

The exercises seemed long to Mary, who was getting anxious because Martin looked so pale and worn. The day had become intolerably hot.

"I wish they would omit some of those numbers," she said to her friends. "I'm really troubled about Mr. Brook."

"Your anxiety will be very soon changed to pride," Mr. Gorton said, cheeringly. "There! Now his chance has come!"

Martin rose and bowed, as the crowd greeted him with applause. He had prepared a line of thought, but, standing here in the presence of those he desired to exhort to patriotism, his mind seemed suddenly a blank. The words would not come to his tongue. His hesitancy was unobserved by every one but Mary. She half rose to her feet, with the thought of going to him; but at that moment, she heard him say:

"Is this the land of the free? We cannot dispute that it is the land of the brave. There is proof of that fact, here and in the distant field. We have been transformed, in a moment, from a nation of peaceful industrialists and farmers to a nation of warriors. We have done this not to repel invaders, but to compel the observance of a principle. Is this the flag of the free?"

A murmur of disapproval ran through the crowd. It acted like a stimulant on Martin.

"Do you murmur at me, or at the law?"

The men on the platform stirred uneasily in their seats.

"We are all loyal to our flag," he continued, "but we do not all agree as to the method of expressing that loyalty. We are freemen, and must exercise the right of free thought; but the cause for which this martial host is assembled is not alone our individual cause—it is the cause of millions, to whom this emblem is not a symbol of freedom; to whom the Declaration you have so loudly cheered is but an empty boast.

"The time has come when we must question the wisdom of our leaders. Leaders, I say—not rulers. We are our own rulers. We must say to these men: 'If you demand our blood and our treasure, you must give us the assurance that the sacrifice is not in vain; that the preservation of the Union means, and shall be effected because of, the removal of the accursed sin which has ever imperilled our national existence.' We must demand of these leaders the emancipation of the slave. More than that, and as a corollary of emancipation, we must demand that the race so liberated shall assume a part of the burdens of this war. Man must work out his own salvation. No one values a gift as he does a hard-earned prize; and in this priceless bestowal of freedom, we should ask the co-operation of the slave."

A roar of angry voices came to the ears of those seated above the heads of the crowd. The restlessness on the stand increased, but Martin did not heed it.

"It is true that we have robbed this race of freedom, and in strict justice we should return it, at whatsoever cost. But for the future good of the blacks, and to the end that they may comprehend the brotherhood of man, we should ask them to join in the working out of this problem.

"Emancipate and arm the blacks—" — Could this ha
been
an
[illegible]

A yell of infuriation broke upon him, drowning the sound of his voice.

It was the cry of a maddened people—the cry of a mob bereft of reason and furious with passion. It was a cry like that he had heard in Troy—one never to be forgotten; one that never varies.

Martin turned towards the point whence it came. Could it be that the people were angry with him—that they resented his words and once more sought his life?

"Hang him! Kill him! Hang him!" Martin heard them scream.

Every one on the platform rose. The crowd in the park swayed and struggled.

Mary sprang to her feet, and held her hands towards Martin. But at that moment she saw it was not Martin who was menaced. A man was fighting his way on the edge of the throng, immediately beneath the stand—he was trying to climb up on it, just in front of Martin. He had fought and been hustled along by some who were evidently trying to rescue him, not because they seemed to be his friends, but evidently to avert a public disgrace.

The man had wrenched a board from the stand, and was clambering up, putting his foot in the aperture and clinging to the railing.

The mass was dense about him. Those nearest him were bracing themselves against the crushing force behind, and fighting for their own release. Women fainted and children were trampled upon.

Farther back, unable to reach the object of their rage, men were gesticulating and throwing a rope in the air, crying out their orders to those in front.

"Pull him down! Take hold of his leg! Pull him down!"

Mary saw Martin reach over the railing and grasp the man—who was hatless, whose clothes were torn—and drag him on to the stand. She saw the foremost of the pursuers leap upon the rail, and Martin lean forward to hold them back. Every motion, every word was plain.

The man turned his face towards her.

It was Sidney Graham.

"What is it?" Martin demanded.

"Get out of our way!" the men cried. "Give him up, or we'll pull the whole thing down!"

Graham sank behind the frail barrier, as the men began to tear the stand to pieces.

Martin reached for the flag. He planted the staff at his feet, shook the folds loose, and flung them about Graham.

"No!" he exclaimed.

The men hesitated an instant, and dropped to the ground.

"What is the meaning of this?" Martin asked.

"He's a rebel!" the men yelled, shaking their fists.

"You can't save him. He just now damned you for an abolitionist, and he said Lincoln was a mudsill and ought to be shot!"

"Yes, yes!" others cried. "We heard him. Hang him!" They surged forward, though with decreasing force.

"No," said Martin, still holding the flag. "You shall not violate the law. While he is here, under the Stars and Stripes, he is protected by all the power of this nation. He is guaranteed the right of trial by jury."

All but the assailants burst into applause.

"Listen to reason," Martin went on. "There is no man on earth who hates me more, nor for whom I have a deeper contempt, than this poor trembling wretch. He has done me personal wrong — he has often insulted me. If there is any one here who would be excused for refusing him assistance, probably I am that one. I care nothing for the man, except to pity him; but he cowers here now, the representative victim of an idea I have combatted for a quarter of a century. I have declared for years the right of every man, however despicable or ignorant or criminal—white or black—to a trial by jury. This flag is, for once, at least, the emblem of a holy power. I am not seeking to deprive you of a single privilege under the law; but I am trying to show you that laws must be obeyed; and that to inculcate reverence and obedience we must make our laws the laws of justice."

Again he was interrupted by cheers. The point was won.

"Now that we are rational," he resumed, "I turn this man over to the hand of recognized authority."

He drew away the flag and motioned to the police. An officer lifted Graham and hurried him into the rotunda.

Martin clung to the railing a moment, overcome by the excitement.

"I must crave your indulgence," he said, feebly. "I am—not—strong—enough—"

He wavered. A friendly hand steadied him as he walked slowly into the Capitol.

Mary hastened as she was able—the crowd making way for her—into the Governor's room. Martin, seated in a chair, attended by friends, held out his hand and smiled, as she ran tearfully to him.

"It's nothing — just a momentary weakness," he insisted.

"Yes, dear, yes," she said. "We'll go home."

"Home *is* a restful place," he said, musingly. "How strangely things come about."

"Don't think of it any more," she commanded, in her gently authoritative way.

Martin was unusually reticent for several days. He was absorbed in thought, and yet he did not take Mary into his confidence. She became greatly distressed. The weather continued to be depressingly hot, and she urged him to go away from the city and the constant stress of the times.

"You owe it to yourself, dear," she said. "Please let us go somewhere for a little change."

"Why not go somewhere for a big change?" he replied, with a touch of his old-time humor. "Why not go to Michigan?"

"Can we afford it? That is such a long journey," she said, trembling at the suggestion of going to Tom.

"I don't mean a visit," he said, "but a home." He sat silent for several minutes. "That idea of a home is taking possession of me like a passion. I should like to feel the extraordinary pleasure of having a permanent address before—before it is carved on a bit of marble."

"Martin!" she said, stopping her ears. "Why do you make such awful speeches?"

"Perhaps it is because all my other speeches are not likely to fetch me a home. Wouldn't it be delightful to screw my door-plate on a front door and say: 'Stay there, you poor wanderer!'"

"It would be like a foretaste of heaven," she said, sighing, "if we could have Tommy with us."

"Of course. We can't think of asking him to give up his chance in the West. I have written to Chichester, who is back in Michigan now, after seeing service at the front, and is raising a regiment. We can't look for a reply immediately, though; and we must wait until my year is up, you know. We must wait patiently."

"Yes," she said. "We've learned how to do that, dear."

And while they waited, the summer burned itself away—burned with a fervid heat—melting the shackles from the slave, setting the bondman free.

Chapter XVI

CONTEMPLATING the mighty change that was worked by the Proclamation of Emancipation; realizing that the labor of redemption was yet to come, and conscious that he was no longer young, Martin gravely shook his head at the thought of undertaking a new work—the work of reconstruction.

"It is not a part of my duty, Mary," he said. "Younger men must assume the burdens of the black race. The liberation of the slaves does not, in a single moment, blot out the ill effects of slavery. This war will last until the people are compelled to spend their utmost strength; but the Union cause will prevail. And then will come a period of chaos. Human nature is not altered by this mere verbal declaration. A generation or two must pass before there can come an appreciation of the error."

"Dear Martin," she said, "let us lay aside the Crusader's armor."

"Yes," he answered, with a sigh, "it is no longer a crusade, it is a campaign of education. And that reminds me, Mary, that I saw old Enoch the other day. Old as he is, he has been down South gathering together some of the children of his relations. He has brought them here. They are a sorry lot."

"And you helped them?"

"A little. I found places for two of the younger ones. You know I owe Enoch more than I can ever repay."

"I owe him still more—your life and love," she said.

Martin looked at Mary. She was crying softly, with her handkerchief to her lips — that gesture so characteristic of her. His own eyes were moist. They were both silent for a time. Then he held out his hand and she took it, nestling close to him.

"Dear one," he whispered, "we have had nearly a quarter of a century of blessed married life. God has taught us one thing—how to love."

He bent above her head, now tinged with silver, and touched her forehead with his lips.

Spring came, bringing Tom from the wilderness, with the air of the pines and the hope of youth. They were going West! Chichester had sent the money for their journey; the die was cast.

The old red boxes and the wooden chests that had served Martin faithfully for many years, were brought out for the last time, and packed with the household goods. There was hustle and bustle in the Hudson Street house.

At last the work of preparation was completed. The final Sunday of Martin's conference year was come. He stood upon the threshold of a new day. His going did not mean the giving up of ministerial functions, but merely the putting off of the active relations with his Church, and the putting on of some softer garment than a coat of mail.

His church was thronged when he entered it on this day. Upon the platform were ministers and men of note who had come to hear his farewell sermon.

They had asked him to make this a review of his life-work, but he had told them that such a statement must be left to others.

One of his friends grasped his hand as he ascended the pulpit.

"This is a glorious day for you, Brother Brook," his friend said.

"It is a sad day," Martin answered, "but I rejoice that our people have found the truth at last."

He took his place on the pulpit sofa, waiting for the time when he must begin the service.

And as he sat there he saw old Enoch, white-haired and bent with years, leaning on his crooked stick, elbowing his way along the aisle, looking for a place to sit.

There was not a vacant seat in the church.

The old man turned to go.

Martin stepped to the side of the platform, called to him and took him by the hand.

"Enoch," he said, "here is a place." He pointed to the pulpit steps.

"Can I set heah, Marse Martin, heah on de gorspel steps, right close to yo' blessed feet, sah?"

"Yes, Enoch, dear old man, sit down. I'm sorry there isn't a more comfortable seat for you."

"I's comf'table whenever I heahs yo' voice."

The old man bowed low and dropped down on the steps.

Martin walked slowly to the desk. He had no notes, but stood a moment or two, looking out over the congregation, until his eyes rested on Mary and Tom in the pew before him. He laid the Bible open to his text, and said, in that vibrant tone which thrilled all listeners:

"When Paul wrote from Rome, after his second summons before Nero, and laid his heart bare before Timothy, he declared: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.'

"To-night those words come ringing to my ears, across the silence of the centuries, through the bellow of war and the glad shouts of liberated millions. The present din is penetrated by their sound. They pierce the nearer earthly roar, like an arrow from the heavenly host. They are spiritual words.

"For more than thirty years I have been engaged in the service of the Church, and now I am asked to give a review of that eventful period. But such a task is beyond my strength. We are yet too near those scenes to treat calmly of them; and it is not of the past, but of the future we must speak. Younger shoulders than ours of the veteran class must assume a load no less heavy than we have borne. A new era is dawning. The excitement of this movement makes us oblivious to the real meaning of emancipation. We have now to take up the herculean task of liberating the minds and souls of those whose bodies, for the first time in our national history, are become free."

In this vein, simply and unassumingly, he foretold the progress of events. The gift of prophecy descended upon him like a tongue of fire. His hearers sat entranced.

As one of his best friends declared, in speaking afterwards of the man he loved: "I cannot in my life remember to have been more moved by human speech. I seemed to see a shining nimbus above his head. His words of tenderness stirred all to tears, and his power of scorn was something terrible to hear. His majestic presence; his searching eye; his masterly acquaintance with all that is most vigorous in our Anglo-Saxon speech; his commanding voice and quiet gesture, intensified by the powers of a grand, vehement soul ablaze for the truth; and our knowledge that he had suffered persecution for this truth, combined to leave upon our minds a most tremendous impression. It was the climax of a zeal that knew no limitation in those dark ages of American history when Martin Brook defied the forces of Church and State, and stood almost alone in his conception of the method of dealing with this great evil—stood forth, braving the world, a pronounced, an intellectual, a spiritual, an uncompromising abolitionist."

But in this moment of supreme realization of the requirements of the hour, Martin did not vaunt himself. As in the past, so in the present, he spoke only of the abstract idea.

Then, while the people sat breathless in their eagerness to lose no word, he paused.

"Dear friends," he said. "I have already spoken beyond the limit of my time; but there is one personal word I must utter before I leave this Conference forever. I must ask those of you—if any there be—whom I heretofore differed with and offended, to forgive me, even as I hope to be forgiven. During these long years I have learned that the Spirit leads us to the Light. Many years ago, on the banks of this river which flows by us, with its unceasing lesson of the purity of its source and its final mergence into the sea, I found God and prayed that He would help me to know the Truth. That knowledge came in a manner unexpected. I learned that 'the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,' and that all humanity are the children of God, regardless of race, color, or condition. We, as a people, have yet much to learn: first of all, to learn to be tolerant, considerate, loving one another in Christ; for Christ came into the world to prove that the Spirit is greater than the flesh, and that our Heavenly Father is—is—Love—"

He stopped suddenly, a choking sound in his throat. He lifted his hand to his head; he tried to draw a long breath as he pressed his hand to his heart. He swayed and turned partly around.

"Mary," he gasped, "the Light! The Light!"

Men sprang up and caught him as he fell.

The congregation started to its feet. A voice rang out:

"The audience will please remain seated. Brother Brook has fainted. Is there a doctor present?"

Mary and Tom were by his side in an instant.

Enoch was kneeling on the pulpit steps, his face upturned, his hands—the hands that the law had freed from the shackles of the slave—held out in benediction.

A man stepped to the edge of the platform and in a low voice said—

"Martin Brook, the Conscientious, has received his final appointment. He has entered upon the communion of the saints."

THE END

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